Thinking with Performance

Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis

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PhD Dissertation: *Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis*

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Prologue

How to begin? A thought. An emotion. An experience. A performance. There are two beginnings to this project. The first is personal. In 2010 I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. For two years I did not ask any questions, did not read about the disease, did not even remember its name. In 2012 I read an interview with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who after 9/11 compared terror to an autoimmune process. This juxtaposition of terror and autoimmunity provided me with a distanced gaze through which I could watch the defect of my body.[1] I started working on the performance lecture *Precarious Life*, about terror and autoimmune diseases.

The second beginning is about the relationship between research, politics, and art. Through the 2000s, I watched many research-based performances and I saw how they responded to conflict and crisis on both a political and a personal level. I recognised the urge to use research within an artistic practice in order to create spaces for thinking. I started thinking about the politics of a research-based aesthetics.

Over time the two beginnings became two interlaced questions: how to think with performance? And how to respond to conflict and crisis through research-based performance?

1 Giovanna Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Introduction

Since the 1990s there has been a focus on artistic research, and at the same time art has adopted research as a strategy in artistic practice.[2] Theatres have created spaces for artistic research, and new genres have appeared, such as performance lecture, performance installation, knowledge exchange performance, and performance as exhibition. These genres use different research strategies – for example, theory, interviews, data, or historical documents – and can be seen as material or immaterial laboratories. They clearly make the research visible in the performances and challenge the audience to think with the artwork. I call these artworks *research-based performances*. Research-based performances do not think for us, but invite us to think with them.[3] When confronted with a research-based performance we might ask: can I think with this work? Does it question, challenge, or negotiate the knowledge I have of the world? Can I engage differently with the world after this experience?

In this project I examine how to think with research-based performance. The title *Thinking with Performance* suggests that research-based performance creates a space for thinking where artist and audience can reflect on the material represented in the performance while at the same time thinking through and with the performance, continuing and developing the line of thought. The aim of the project is to capture the interdisciplinary meeting between art and research and to formulate a research-based aesthetics. This concept seeks to identify a working mode visible in a number of artistic practices that use and create research at the same time. Research-based aesthetics de-

2 This study understands the emergence of research-based art practices and artistic research from the mid-1990s on in relation to institutional changes such as the emergence of the Bologna Process in 1999 within an educational context and in relation to the increased focus on knowledge production within the arts. I will return to knowledge production later in this introduction and to the historical context of research-based performance in Chapter 1. However, I want to emphasise that my aim is not to contribute to the institutional definitions of artistic research but to focus on how artistic research enacts practice in performance. In this project it means allowing my work to be informed by performance, and allowing my use of performance to be informed by my thought. For a discussion of the relation between art as research and the reforms within higher educations see Henk Bergdorff, "The Debate on Research in the Arts", text based on lectures and presentations on research in the arts, held in the autumn of 2005 in Ghent, Amsterdam, Berlin and Gothenburg, accessed 14 January 2019, https://konst.gu.se/digitalAssets/1322/1322713_the_debate_on_research_in_the_arts.pdf. For more discussions about research methods in art schools after the Bologna Process see Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vettese (eds.), *Art as a Thinking Process: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013).

3 This applies both to the spectator and to the artist.

scribes how a work establishes relations between different fields of knowledge and non-knowledge and how it produces new knowledge and repeats "old" knowledge. I focus on performances that respond artistically to conflict and crisis.[4] Further, I examine how the performances transform and document research in different ways, using fact, affect, and documentary strategies to represent the researched and reflected material.

The underlying premise of the project is that there is no better way to understand the exchange between research and performance than by making research-based performance and doing artistic research: thinking through art and thinking about art. The project thus has two dimensions: on the one hand, I develop two performances using different research strategies; on the other, I analyse how research-based performance creates new spaces for thinking. The project is based on this duality, where I work artistically with research, while at the same time developing a conceptual framework of research-based aesthetics.

The first performance, *Precarious Life*, is a performance lecture about terror and autoimmune diseases. The second performance, *This is for her*, is about torture and therapy. Both performances focus on conflicts in the body of society and in the individual body. They pose a question that is answered through objective and subjective strategies. I examine the effect and affect of terror, autoimmunity, torture and therapy. In this project I challenge the separation between the artistic process and the performance. Rather, I propose that the artistic process is always a performance, and that the performance is always an artistic process.

The PhD project consists of the two performances and this dissertation. The dissertation contains reflections on my artistic work process, analyses of artworks, and readings of theory. As such, it points to how the different acts of thinking affect each other. I change perspective throughout the project: I am actor and observer; I am artist and audience. And then there is an extra dimension: this type of project cannot avoid a self-reflective meta-discussion about the method in which it lives, becomes, and exists. Artistic research takes place both in the making of the two performances and in the making of the concept research-based aesthetics. It is the entanglement of these three dimensions – the development of a conceptual framework, the

4 I do not focus on works that primarily pursue research into aesthetic, methodological, or formal matters, although such works clearly are research-based.

making of the two performances, and the mode of artistic research – that gives this project its particularity.

The constant shift in perspective both in the performance practice and in the writing practice poses several methodological questions. How is it possible to perform knowledge differently in research-based performance and in the written reflection without risking simply reproducing known modes of knowledge? How to risk, and continue risking, not being taken seriously as an artist doing research or as an academic doing practice?[5] How to exchange serious and non-serious strategies between the performance and the written reflection? The issue of art and artistic research as "non-serious" serves as a methodological starting-point for examining how to make knowledge *other* in research-based performance and artistic research.

As is clear by now, this project consists of several fluctuating work layers, a complex method, and a web of interrelated questions addressing how to think with performance and how to respond to conflict and crisis through research-based performance. Before following these work tracks, I will clarify some theoretical, conceptual, and methodological choices. This introduction will thus consist of: 1) a preliminary conceptual and contextual identification of "research-based aesthetics" as a way of thinking artistically through and with performance; 2) a short introduction to my two performances and how they are linked by Derrida's concept of democratic autoimmunity; and 3) methodological considerations about the exchange between artistic research and research-based performance in the project. Finally, the introduction contains an itinerary parsing dramaturgy, forms of language, and composition in the dissertation. Hopefully, the following will serve as a reading guide.

What is Research-Based Aesthetics?

I am writing here about research-based performance and research-based aesthetics. Whereas research-based performance refers to the singular artwork, research-based aesthetics is a concept that aims to describe what research-based works do, how they do it, and why they do it. I want to qualify what it means to produce research-based works and how artists use, create, and perform research in order to imagine other realities. As this inquiry will show,

5 Queer theorist Gavin Butt has interestingly questioned the implicit values of "seriousness" in academic scholarship. See Gavin Butt, "Scholarly Flirtations", in Angelika Nollert et al. (eds.), *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.* (Berlin: Revolver, 2006), 187–92. I will discuss how to queer knowledge in Chapter 3.

research-based aesthetics is not limited to one specific genre (such as the performance lecture) or research strategy but involves a reconsideration of the artwork and the ways it operates in the world. Research-based aesthetics is an attempt to pinpoint how performance can use and create research in a way that can be described while at the same time it goes beyond this description, transcending the standard frames of knowledge.

I want to argue that the use of research in performance and the increased focus on knowledge production within the arts can be seen as a mirror of the growth in knowledge production in various spheres of our daily lives and in society.[6] This development is complex. On the one hand, it seems that art adopts strategies of knowledge production in order to legitimise its status at a time when, under neo-liberal capitalism, knowledge has become increasingly financialised. On the other hand, there is a critical potential because artists can pose questions such as: what is knowledge? What is not knowledge? What knowledge can be produced and what cannot? By whom? And where? The question is whether the meeting between objective and subjective modes in research-based performance allows new ways of thinking. I prefer the concept of thinking as something unfinished rather than as knowledge production. Knowledge production sounds as if knowledge can be finished or result in a product that can be sold and bought and looked at. Thinking is really an unfinished business.

Research-based aesthetics point to a performance situation in which the performer[7] and the spectator can examine knowledge, non-knowledge, knowledge that cannot be measured, and knowl-

6 In her PhD dissertation "Acts of Research", modern culture scholar Sidsel Nelund argues that the emergence of the term "knowledge production" in the contemporary arts can be seen in relation to the knowledge economy following the end of the Cold War in 1989. The critical art scene of the 1990s appropriated the term (even though it came out of the discourse of the neo-liberal knowledge economy), and by the early 2000s the term was used widely in artistic and curatorial projects. Sidsel Nelund, "Acts of Research: Knowledge Production in Contemporary Arts between Knowledge Economy and Critical Practice", University of Copenhagen, 2015, 11–12. Within a performance context we could point to several educational and economic reasons for the growing focus on knowledge production. In an educational context, the Bologna Process has meant that art schools have had to adjust to higher-education qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. See "The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area," accessed 14 January 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20150923234414/http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/QF-EHEA-May2005.pdf. In an economic context, I would argue that cuts in funding within the arts have made it attractive to produce cheaper "process works" with the important dimension of knowledge production underlining the "value" of creating a performance. Further, projects that facilitate the interaction between art and research have increased funding opportunities because their funds applications can be directed both towards artistic and academic support structures.

7 I want to add that the performer can be human or non-human because a number of performances use objects as performers: for instance, in Mette Ingvartsen's performance *The Artificial Nature Project* (2012), where different materials perform the choreography. See "*The Artificial Nature Project*", http://www.metteingvartsen.net/performance/the-artificial-nature-project/.

edge as authority.[8] The critique of institutionalised knowledge is not new. Notably, philosopher Michel Foucault uses the concept "power-knowledge" to show how power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge.[9] Furthermore, philosopher Paul Feyerabend's concept of "theoretical anarchism" destabilises the idea of secure knowledge by proposing that there is not just one scientific method, which is always followed by scientists.[10] This critique of institutionalised knowledge serves as a backdrop for the preoccupation with thinking rather than knowledge production in this project. The theoretical focus is on the relation between research and art. As such the discussion discovers premises not only for research-based performance but also for artistic research.

Is "research-based aesthetics" the right term? It offers no clear demarcation lines for how a research-based practice works. Broadly speaking, everyone can say that theirs is a research-based practice, as all practice involves some research. Claiming as much offers a clear advantage in the competition for funding. Knowledge production is still a buzzword legitimising artistic practice, and research-based art inevitably leads to the production of knowledge.[11] However, I have chosen to stick with the broad term because it makes it possible to look at very different performances, from ones that use theory or philosophy in their investigation to ones that use archival or anthropological strategies in their research. I delimit the field by focusing on performances that respond to conflict and crisis on a personal or political level. My aim is not to define a method or a format but to reflect on how thinking acts in research-based performance. I consider performance not as a tool for producing knowledge but as an opportunity to think about urgent issues.

The focus on performance is linked to my own performance practice: I make performances, and I write about performance. I work around a notion of "expanded performance", which covers various forms of artistic expression within performance, the performing arts,

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8 For a good discussion of knowledge production and non-knowledge see Sarat Maharaj, "Know-how and No-How: Stopgap Notes on 'Method' in Visual Art as Knowledge Production", in *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 2:2 (2009).

9 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).

10 Paul K. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London and New York: Verso, 2010) and *Science in a Free Society* (London: NLB, 1978).

11 Writer Jan Verwoert has remarked with irony that the easiest way to legitimise your artwork is to label it as "research-based art" or "art as a form of knowledge production". Jan Verwoert, "Why Is Art Met with Disbelief? It's Too Much Like Magic", in *Cookie!* (Berlin: Piet Zwart Institute and Sternberg Press, 2014), 94.

and choreography.[12] However, I will include works by filmmakers, visual artists, and writers that are important for my research. Performance is my starting-point, but I draw on art more widely, acknowledging the overlap between different art forms and thinking. I will argue that research-based performance creates spaces for thinking, existing, and reacting, which are different from the dominant paradigms of knowledge within academia and science. The meeting between subjective and objective practices allows for new possible readings of complex problems: in this project, the relation between terror and autoimmunity and between torture and therapy.

The Performance Situation

Research-based performance is not just based on research: it also creates research. The performances and artworks that I have chosen to write about and the two performances of my own are formally and thematically different, but they all create material and immaterial spaces for thinking. The material space is here understood as the actual space where the research is performed and the immaterial as the non-visible layers of thinking that unfold in and between human bodies. The reflective dimension of research-based performance cannot take place without a spectator who is actively thinking with the artwork. This project understands the performance situation in a way that resonates with philosopher Jacques Rancière's description of the emancipated spectator who is not, and cannot be, a passive voyeur.[13] He calls for spectators who are always mentally active and who translate the artwork into their own story: "An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators."[14] This un-

12 These artworks comprise various media and can be shown in various types of art institution, such as theatres, museums, or public spaces. I borrow the term "expanded" from a dance context, where expanded choreography designates choreography that moves beyond movement and body and uses words, objects, or theory as material. Examples are Mårten Spångberg, Mette Ingvartsen and Jerome Bel. For an insightful contextualisation of choreography in the expanded field see Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki, "Editorial: On Choreography", *Performance Research* 13:1 (2008), 1–6. Importantly, the idea of "expansion" takes place within different wings of the performing arts. For an introduction to "expanded scenography" see Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer (eds.), *Scenography Expanded: An Introduction to Contemporary Performance Design* (London and New York: Bloomsbury).

13 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso, 2011). Importantly, Rancière's identification of the emancipated spectator comes with an attack on critical thinking, which has identified the audience as passive, and on political art, which has failed in its attempt to create change by reinforcing the system. His thoughts about the equality between artwork and recipient can be understood in relation to his perception of the equality of intelligence between teacher and student, which means that the student's learning is not reliant on the teacher and the role of the teacher is to strengthen the student's self-confidence so that he or she can learn independently and be emancipated. Ultimately emancipation is a political act uncovering the equal intelligence of all people. See Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

14 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 22.

derstanding makes it possible to see how thinking comes into being as vibrant matter in the research-based performance situation in which the spectator transforms the represented research into a space of individual thinking.

Further, Rancière's conceptualisation of the political dimension of aesthetics and the aesthetic dimension of politics is important for the way I consider the political, aesthetic, and democratic potentialities of research-based artworks.[15] He argues that society is structured around a social order consisting of implicit rules and conventions, which decide the distribution of roles in society: "The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed."[16] Thus, the social order is at its core anti-democratic, because it tries to maintain the system of inclusion and exclusion. Politics represents the opposite: it aims to create a new distribution of the sensible. And so does art, because "artistic practices are 'ways of doing and making' that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making [...]".[17]

Rancière is writing about critical art, which engages with the social and political structures of today's society. Now, what is the particularity of research-based performance? Does it set up an unbalanced relation between spectator and artist, preventing the equality and emancipation of the two parties? In this project I use Rancière's theory as a vehicle to propose how research-based performance sets up a temporal and spatial framework in which the spectator can think independently. Ultimately, research-based performance becomes a political act of displacing the distribution of the sensible, questioning the locations of knowledge in society. The overlap between politics and aesthetics occurs when research-based performance responds to conflict and crisis thinking through a specific problem and through a specific format with research.[18]

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15 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Continuum, 2004). See also Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

16 Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

17 Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13.

18 I include Rancière here because his writing is important for how I understand the relation between the spectator and the artwork in this study. However, since the performance situation is not the main focus here, I will not address it or Rancière's writing in a separate chapter.

Conceptualisation

In the conceptualisation of research-based aesthetics I develop my own framework where different theories feed into the formation of the concept. The theoretical focus is the relation between research and art. I examine how and whether research-based aesthetics shares lines of thoughts with "relational aesthetics", a phrase coined by theorist and curator Nicolas Bourriaud to describe artists working with collectivisation and social relations as their material.[19] Thinking with and through contemporary art practices of the 1990s, Bourriaud uncovers the principles of art as a form of social exchange. Relational aesthetics is a theory "consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt".[20] My project focuses on the relationship between different fields of knowledge and on how the breakdown of knowledge hierarchies can lead to new forms of knowledge.

Looking at philosopher Félix Guattari's last book, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, I reflect on the relational dynamics in research-based art between different lines of thought.[21] Expanding on these thoughts, I discuss how Guattari and fellow philosopher Gilles Deleuze identify philosophy, science, and art as three planes of thinking that can intersect.[22] Their distinction between art that creates affects and percepts, science that makes functions, and philosophy that makes concepts leads me to discuss whether research-based art only makes affects and percepts or whether it hijacks strategies from philosophy and science to make or perform functions and concepts. Cultural theorist Mieke Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* enters the discussion to demonstrate how concepts travel between disciplines and to understand the interdisciplinary knowledge flow between research and art in the performance situation.[23] Moving closer to artistic practice, I examine visual culture theorist Irit Rogoff's concept of an "embodied criticality" to illuminate the complex exchange between practice and theory.[24] I bring the theoretical inquiry to a close by trying out queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept

19 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

20 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 112.

21 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Sydney: Power, 1995).

22 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

23 Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

24 Irit Rogoff, "'Smuggling' – An Embodied Criticality" (2006), accessed 14 January 2019, http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling.

of "weak theories" in order to ask for different strategies of queering knowledge.[25] The political dimension of Rogoff's and Sedgwick's theoretical framework lays out the foundation for identifying how research-based aesthetics can be a way of responding critically to conflict and crisis.

I have now given a preliminary outline of the concept of research-based aesthetics and of how it will be used in this dissertation. Of course, there are a number of questions to be asked. What is researched and for whom? How do the performances deal with performative promises such as presence, collectivity, democracy, and inter-subjective meetings? Where does the research take place: in the audience, in the work, or in the process? Without denying the importance of these questions, I choose to be critically optimistic. I consider artistic research to be an important contribution to knowledge, and I argue the research unfolds in the artist, in the audience, and in the artwork/process. Presence, collectivity, democracy, and inter-subjective meetings are not static figures but are negotiated in each artwork.

Times of Conflict and Crisis

> The past is never dead. It's not even past.
>
> **William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, 1951**

This project comes out of an idea that the past, present, and future are not dead.[26] If they have been "dead", they exist again and they call for a response. The assumption that we live in times defined by conflict and crisis forms the basis of asking how research-based performance reacts artistically to urgencies in an aesthetic manner.[27] I

25 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

26 Without going into a theoretical discussion of the historical temporalities available for us at this moment, I refer to political scientist Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992) but also to the writing of the radical political thinker Franco "Bifo" Berardi, who describes the future as already lost, impossible to imagine, collapsed as a possibility in the present society. See Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *After the Future* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011).

27 Since I draw on the theoretical writing of philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari in the creation of the concept of research-based aesthetics, it is important to underline that I am not referring to his conceptualization of crisis related to economic and ecological issues here. In *The Three Ecologies* he argues that the ecological crises of today are a consequence of how capitalism has developed and that we must develop an ecosophical understanding to accommodate the differences between living systems. See Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2014). In *Les années d'hiver* Guattari describes the many crises of capitalist society as a malfunction in the economic order of today. See Félix Guattari, *Les années d'hiver* (Paris: Les Prairies Ordinaires, 2009). In this project the word "crisis" does not refer to radical politics with focus on economic or ecological crises, but resonates with crisis in a broader context.

want to argue that research-based performance offers a different response to conflict and crisis from other means of representation, such as the media, which may react according to a demand for fast and interesting (sensational) news, academia, which may react through theoretically complex writing, or the political system, which may react through the execution of power. My two performances are both formal and thematic reactions to problems that have disturbed me at a personal and political level.

First Reaction: *Precarious Life*. Terror and Autoimmunity. Performance Lecture

Precarious Life is a performance lecture about terror and autoimmune diseases. Terror and autoimmune diseases have something in common: neither can be defeated, because the threat comes from within. The performance has a personal and political aim. The personal aim consists in understanding why the body suddenly attacks itself. The political consists in examining the autoimmunity of terror and in asking: how do we act when confronted with something that cannot be defeated? In the making of *Precarious Life* I used different research strategies and I gathered theory and information from different fields, such as medicine, biology, philosophy, counter-terrorism, and political science. I combined my research with autobiographical material, employing a variety of artistic strategies. By doing so, I worked to break down knowledge hierarchies. My work was both to transfer the metaphor of terror and autoimmune diseases to the stage and also to examine what happens when the barriers between theoretical thinking and artistic doing are broken down.

Second Reaction: *This is for her*. Torture and Therapy. Performance

This is for her is a performance about torture and therapy. On stage are two women. A victim and a perpetrator. A patient and a therapist. Torture and therapy always involve two people. Torture is about destroying the trust in other people. It only takes a moment, but it takes a lifetime to get back to everyday life again.[28]

The dramaturgy of the performance follows a three-part structure. The first part is a solo documentary monologue in which I re-enact interviews I made with victims of torture in Argentina in 2017. The

28 It is significant that my description of *This is for her* follows the material performance very closely. There is a big difference between my writing on *Precarious Life*, written after having finished the production, and my writing on *This is for her*, written during the process, and making performance research and writing nourish each other in a reciprocal manner.

second part takes us to the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, reflecting on our current complicity in the use of torture in armed conflicts far away. The third part brings us back home, discussing the effect of therapy on the victim of torture and the soldier coming home from war. In the performance I use different forms of documentary storytelling: retelling of interviews with victims of torture, reenactment of scenes of violence, and dissemination of theoretical and archival research on torture and therapy.

Link between the Performances: Democratic Autoimmunity

In *This is for her* torture is exposed as a side-effect of the War on Terror described in *Precarious Life*. In order to protect democracy against terror, democracy uses methods that are non-democratic, such as torture. In his thought-provoking article "Terror, Torture and Democratic Autoimmunity", philosopher Leigh M. Johnson expands Derrida's concept of autoimmunity to describe how torture comes to be seen as a possibility in and for democracy as a means to protect itself.[29] As I understand it, Johnson's argument is that trying to protect democracy by using torture undermines the very foundations of democracy itself. War, torture, and terror are parts of a relational network where each part produces the other parts constantly. Thus, the ending of *Precarious Life* became the beginning of *This is for her*. The two performances mirror each other by how they look at autoimmunity in the body of society and in the individual body. Although this link is not articulated in the performances, Derrida's concept of democratic autoimmunity was essential to the work process.[30] Within biology, autoimmunity means that the body creates antibodies that are directed against one of its own organs. Derrida proposes to expand the figure of autoimmunity from a biological phenomenon to a description of the precariousness of contemporary democracy. Here I will briefly outline how the autoimmune figure can be seen in relation to terror and torture.

In an interview with philosopher Giovanna Borradori, Derrida reflects on the autoimmunity of terror and identifies three phases in

29 Leigh M. Johnson, "Terror, Torture and Democratic Autoimmunity", *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 38:1 (2012), 105–24.

30 Derrida's writing on democratic autoimmunity is developed in Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 2005), Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), and Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone", in *Acts of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002).

the suicidal autoimmunity of which 9/11 is a symptom.[31] First, 9/11 points back to the Cold War. The people who planned and executed the attacks were trained by the US to fight against the USSR during the war in Afghanistan. Second, the attack was not over after 9/11. This phase belongs to the temporality of trauma. Derrida argues that the trauma is produced by the future, by the threat of what is coming: for instance, chemical, biological, or nuclear attacks organised by anonymous terror cells. Third, the Western world's reaction to 9/11 demonstrates that the autoimmune logic is going to continue: by declaring war on terror, the Western world began a war against itself. Derrida calls for a continuous deconstruction of the differences between war and terror in order to be able to analyse the political chaos that has unfolded in Western democracies since 9/11.

In *Precarious Life* I use Derrida's concept to reflect on the future "war" in the body of society and in the human body. I worked with terror as a metaphor for an autoimmune dysfunction in the human body and with autoimmunity as a metaphor for an autoimmune dysfunction in the body of society. I was constantly aware of the pitfalls of metaphors – how they describe and thereby make reality – and asked myself whether the widespread metaphorical language about war and terror was itself part of the autoimmune logic. Do the rhetorical affects and effects following the War on Terror produce their own "autoimmune diseases" at a societal level? Do they reduce our ability to handle the world around us? Later this proposal made me ask whether torture can be seen as a systemic overreaction on terror. This question links the two performances together.

How can the reality of torture and therapy, terror, and autoimmunity be represented in the format of a performance? Working on the performances, I looked for strategies that would show some parts of an unreliable truth. Thinking about formats of representation and looking at different artworks were a big part of the artistic research process: how do works do what they do? How do they perform violence? How do they use fact and affect to create thinking?

Fact, Affect, Document

In the making of *Precarious Life* and *This is for her*, I used different types of research: I read theoretical works, carried out interviews, consulted archive material, and looked at autobiographical writing. Through-

31 Derrida describes the three phases in Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 94–100. The argument is elaborated on in the script for *Precarious Life* and in Chapter 2.

out the artistic process I was troubled about how to document the theoretical findings and the researched reality in the performances. In *Precarious Life* the research and autobiographical writing are completely visible to the spectator. In *This is for her* I moved into a way of using research that was new for me, stepping into a half-fictional/half-documentary representation of reality.

Working with the performances and looking at other research-based art practices, it became clear that each research-based artwork transforms, documents, and represents the research in different ways. Towards the end of this dissertation I will examine how research-based artworks use fact-based, affective, and documentary strategies to represent the researched and reflected material.

How I Use Theory

The project follows a triple endeavour of conceptualising research-based aesthetics, performing research on terror, autoimmunity, torture, and therapy, and writing about the performance process. In all these instances I combine readings of theory, others' work, and my own work. Yet my approach to theory is different in each of the three dimensions. In the development of the conceptual framework I use theory critically. In the artistic process I use research accumulative, generating new thoughts, frameworks for thinking, associative performance writing, and actions for the performance. This process has an affirmative approach. I use the theory without focusing on the potential academic weaknesses and flaws of the theoretical argument. Lastly, in writing about the performance, the theoretical approach is more complex because it has to mirror the artistic use of theory in the performances. However, a written dissertation would normally apply a critical method of discussing theory from different angles whereas my approach in the artistic process has been to collect, accumulate, and use theory. I choose theories that I can actively use, and I do not always bring a full discussion of their argument, including other critical voices. I read theory to create performance and I read theory to think about performance in the written reflection. I try to respond to the process that took place and that is taking place. Sometimes an artwork or a personal experience appears as important as a theoretical or archival document because it is also research and pushes my performance research process forward.

Method

> The old boundaries between making and theorizing, historicizing and displaying, criticizing and affirming have long been eroded.
>
> **Irit Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", 2008**[32]

The historical split between embodied and conceptual knowledge is challenged by new research modes in which practice and theory overlap both within the university, art academy, or art institution and in the artist's work space.[33] The interaction between practical and theoretical knowledge has created a field of practice research, which houses a number of different terms, such as "practice-based research", "practice-led research", "artistic research", and "performative research".[34] To make matters more complicated, different researchers and practitioners use the terms rather differently.[35] A common denominator is that these research strategies all give space for the work of "the reflective practitioner", to borrow a term coined by philosopher and professor in urban planning Donald Schön.[36] Further, I would argue, they all generate new ideas, be it conceptual, theoretical, or artistic, a process that professor of cognitive science Margaret A. Boden describes as creativity.[37] In the following I will give a brief introduction to the terms "practice-based research", "practice-led research", "performative research", and "artistic research". As I see it, they differ in how they conceive the metabolism between practice and research and between aesthetic and theoretical outcomes.

Writer and researcher into practice-based research Linda Candy offers a clear distinction between practice-*based* research, in which the artwork is "the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge", and practice-*led* research, in which the "research *leads* [...] to new under-

32 Irit Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", in James Elkins and Michael Newman, *The State of Art Criticism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 97.

33 See Mikkel Bogh and Frederik Tygstrup, "Working the Interface: New Encounters between Art and Academia", in José Quaresma et al. (eds.), *Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation* (Lisbon: Edição CIEBA, 2011), 103.

34 For an introduction and discussion of these different strands see Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

35 Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, "Introduction: Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice – Towards the Iterative Cyclic Web", in Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (eds.), *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 25.

36 Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

37 Margaret A. Boden, *Creativity and Art: Three Roads to Surprise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

standings about practice".[38] This definition is very useful, but it does not take into account the fact that a project may contain both practice-based and practice-led research, which is the case with my project: the performances are the basis of the contribution to knowledge, and at the same time the theoretical research leads to new understandings about research-based aesthetics. Further, the performances are also *based* on the theoretical research, and the research not only leads to understanding about practice but also contributes to actively building a practice.

Research professors Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean suggests that practice-led research refers "both to the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which might then be documented, theorized and generalized".[39] This broad definition covers a number of different works, methods, and formats, but I do not find it adequate for this project, in which the research takes place in the performance process, the writing about the practice, and the conceptualisation of research-based aesthetics. Research does not only *lead* to practice and practice does not only *lead* to research; theoretical research can indeed happen within the performance process, and the performance process can indeed happen within theoretical research.

One could discuss whether a term such as "performative research" would not be a more precise definition of the exchange between performance and research in this project. Theatre scholar Brad Haseman proposes that "performative research" offers a new research strategy as an alternative to quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.[40] He builds the concept around J. L. Austin's speech act theory, in which performative speech acts are utterances that do not *describe* something but *do* something – "to *say* something is to *do* something"[41]

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38 Linda Candy, *Practice Based Research: A Guide*, accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.creativityandcognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1-2006.pdf, 1. The full definition is as follows: "*Practice-based Research* is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes. *Practice-led Research* is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. In a doctoral thesis, the results of practice-led research may be fully described in text form without the inclusion of a creative work. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. Such research includes practice as an integral part of its method and often falls within the general area of action research."

39 Smith and Dean, "Introduction: Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice", 7.

40 Brad Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research", *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy* 118:1 (2006), 1.

41 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 12.

– for example, "'I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*' – as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem".[42] Haseman argues that performative research is expressed in forms of symbolic data understood as material forms of practice other than words in discursive text, which work performatively: "It not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself."[43] He characterises quantitative research as "scientific method", qualitative research as "multi-method", and performative research as "multi-method led by practice". This division is rather crude. Haseman defines qualitative research as "social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data"[44] and thereby omits a number of critical or speculative research strategies such as textual and conceptual analysis, cultural critique, or phenomenology, which are important in practice research and in this project.

I like the concept of performative research: it establishes the artwork as research; it shows how artworks *do things*, and how practice research is performative. However, I think Haseman reduces the concept when he argues that performative research is expressed *in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text* as described above. In my project the research consists not only of symbolic data (the performances) but also in words in discursive text (the dissertation). The project is structured in such a way that the performances and the written dissertation interact.[45] Thus, I propose a research mode in which all parts of the process – writing, rehearsing, reading, and performing – are research and performance at the same time. Performance research is both *performance thinking* and *performative thinking*: that is, it is both an event that takes place in different situations (performance, writing, discussing, reading) and the performative exchange between art and research in these processes. It is performance as research and research as performance.

For these reasons I will not use the terms "practice-based", "practice-led", or "performative" research but instead use the term "artistic

42 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 5.

43 Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research", 6.

44 Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research", 6. Haseman uses the definition given in Thomas A. Schwandt, *Dictionary of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 213.

45 For further information about the requirements of the PhD education in a Danish context see: *Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions*; Part 3, 5, accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.dtu.dk/-/media/dtudk/uddannelse/phd-udannelse/dokumenter/engelsk-ph-d-bekendtgorelse.ashx. For an introduction to practice-based PhDs at Goldsmiths University London, and an analysis of why they matter, see Andrea Phillips, "Why Practice-Based PhDs are Political", in José Quaresma et al. (eds.), *Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation* (Lisbon: Edição CIEBA, 2011), 69–79.

research" (which covers performance research), in order to situate this project within the terminology current in the field of practice research, acknowledging that it has elements of performative, practice-led, and practice-based research.[46] Artistic research is a contested concept, which comes with a variety of different definitions depending on the artistic or educational context. In a Danish context the concept has been defined by the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts as follows: "Artistic research is a research concept that focuses on the practice of art as an action that generates knowledge and insight. New knowledge can be produced in works of art, partly in terms of their materiality and partly through the technical and theoretical know-how that forms the basis of the work."[47] The openness of this definition gives space for the different work dimensions in artistic research, including the myriad of forms it can take.

Curator and theorist Simon Sheikh has pointed out that artistic research can be either research into artistic practices, research as artistic practice, or research done artistically.[48] This description is apt for describing my artistic practice: I conduct research in the two performances, in the development of the concept research-based aesthetics, and in the writing about the process. Artistic research unfolds *through the research-based performance and through the research-based dissertation*. The research-based art practice cannot be conceived without the artistic research that takes place within it. The dissertation and the two performances are to be understood not as concluding remarks but as punctual presentations pushing the durational research-based practice in new directions. Curator and theorist Mika Hannula has proposed that the work of the artistic researcher is to be an artist, who develops her artistic practice, writes about her research in order to develop the field of artistic research, and develops a relational space with other artists and audiences.[49] In this project I seek to accommodate these three tasks.

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46 For more on the methodology, knowledge production, and research outcomes in different branches of practice-related research please see the two anthologies already mentioned: *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts* and *Art as a Thinking Process*.

47 "Artistic Research", accessed 14 January 2019, https://kunstakademiet.dk/da/about-research. See also the Danish Ministry of Culture's definition of artistic development work/artistic research, "Kunstnerisk udviklingsvirksomhed", accessed 14 January 2019, https://kum.dk/publikationer/2012/kunstnerisk-udviklingsvirksomhed/.

48 Simon Sheikh, "Objects of Study or Commodification of Knowledge? Remarks on Artistic Research", in *Art and Research. A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 2:2 (2009), 1, accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/sheikh.html.

49 See Mika Hannula et al., *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014).

Voice

> Just as for the rest of us, what scientists believe or say they do and what they actually do have a very loose fit.
>
> **Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", 1988**[50]

According to feminist theorist Donna Haraway, knowledge always works from a specific point of view. It is situated in a historical and geographical context, and it depends on cultural and social values. I use her term "situated knowledge" to describe my position in this project. Haraway criticises "the disembodied scientific objectivity"[51] and proposes an "embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects".[52] While my project is not a feminist science project per se, my voice is subjective and I am situated as a female artist working in between the art institution and the university. Further, Haraway's analysis of how scientific knowledge is produced and accepted within different research paradigms has affected my methodological considerations. She states that "official ideologies about objectivity and scientific method are particularly bad guides to how scientific knowledge is actually *made*".[53] Her critique of claims for objectivity within the scientific research paradigm makes it possible to understand how artistic research operates *as* research, not claiming objectivity but performing situated knowledge. As I will discuss later, Rogoff's term "criticality" proposes how the artist can reflect on her work from within the work process, how it is possible to criticise structures while at the same working within them. I try to be critical towards art's reproduction of knowledge values. But I also try to believe in the potential of the field of research-based aesthetics.

I have an academic and artistic background, which is clear at every level of this project: I perform a double practice. I combine an artistic approach with a critical theoretical and analytical approach, which, I would argue, is evident both in the writing and in the performances. I am situated as both an object and a subject in the research process. I write, stage, and perform, and I reflect on this process. The subjective dimension makes it possible to see, touch, and exist within the process, but it also makes it difficult to take an objective point of view.

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50 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies* 14:3 (1988), 576.

51 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", 576.

52 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", 581.

53 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges", 576.

Further, the exchange between research and art is affected by the time-lags between the performance and the writing that takes place after the performance. I try to meet these challenges by using "objective research" in the performances and "subjective performance" tools in the writing, thus interlacing the two processes. The dissertation follows the itinerary of the project and uses the logic of a montage by bringing together theoretical writing, performance scripts, and working notes. There are circles and repetitions, which mirror the iterative working process. I perform artistic research in the writing. The different modes of writing on, with, or after the process make it possible to observe how theory and practice affect each other back and forth in performance research. Sometimes the balance between research and performance is on the verge of failure, but this "failure" makes it possible to move the demarcation lines between the two fields, letting them interact in the process, in the dissertation, in the performances, in the audience, and in the reader.

Boundaries

The guiding principle of this project is that research opens new ways of thinking in performance, while performance opens new ways of thinking in research. Within an artistic and academic context there has been a focus on describing and qualifying the research dimension and knowledge production in the artistic practice and in showing artistic research "in action".[54] This project uses a different focus by examining how research-based practice uses and creates thinking through practice and through reflection on that practice. Different questions can be asked: how to avoid becoming superficial in either the research on terror, autoimmunity, torture, and therapy or in the writing on research-based performance? How to balance the relation between the development of a conceptual framework and the artistic practice? And how to navigate in a project that contains multiple research-questions, methods, and theories? My approach has been to illuminate research-based performance from different theoretical and

54 For a study of how art can conduct research within a visual arts context see Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005). Sullivan not only encompasses how the artistic process is a form of research but also argues convincingly why art offers another perspective than the social sciences. Relevant for this study is also Mark Fleishman's analysis of how performance as research can be seen as a series of embodied repetitions encompassing the artistic practice and the artistic event. See Mark Fleishman, "The Difference of Performance as Research", *Theatre Research International* 37:1 (2012), 28–37. In a Danish context it is important to highlight the symposium "Nye Dimensioner – Hvad er Kunstnerisk Forskning" ("New Dimensions – What is Artistic Research?"), 24–6 November 2011, which had artists and researchers meet and discuss the limits and potentials of artistic research. It is documented in Laura Luise Schultz and Stig Jarl (eds.), *Nye Dimensioner – Hvad er Kunstnerisk Forskning* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2014).

practical angles. While I would have liked to include more examples of research-based practices from different historical and geographical contexts, I have a deep respect for the time it takes to make such analyses. I have prioritised the time differently and chosen to combine research and performance with the aim of extending the discussion about performance as research and in so doing affect the development of the field and the understanding of knowledge as a relational practice.[55]

Dramaturgy

The dissertation contains formal and informal language, all controlled by a dramatic structure with two acts, which each contain a performance script and three chapters. It begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue. I insert "logs" in the individual chapters, which refer back to specific reflections during the work process. The use of both academic and artistic structuring principles – "Chapters", "Acts", "Log", "Epilogue", and "Prologue" – is an attempt to mirror the exchange between theoretical and artistic practice in the project. While the dissertation is scripted using principles of classical drama (without any reversal or catharsis), the material in each chapter follows an open dramaturgy, with searching, uncertain movements between reflections on practice, theory, and performance. My use of theatrical concepts is closely related to my practice in the performing arts.[56] There may not be one linear argument in the dissertation, but the dramaturgy mirrors the temporality and spatiality of the process. Thus, the organisation of the material follows the order in which the work took place. Act 1 covers the first performance, *Precarious Life*, and the development of a theoretical framework. Act 2 follows the making of the second performance, *This is for her*, and articulates reflections on and the complications of the concept of research-based aesthetics. *Precarious Life* is the beginning; *This is for her* is the continu-

55 A new definition of knowledge focusing on context, reflexivity, and transdisciplinarity described as Mode 2 knowledge was proposed by Michael Gibbons et al., *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1994). Mode 2 knowledge does not necessarily explains what is at stake in artistic research but points to the possible disruption of institutionalised research regimes, which also take place in practice research.

56 Theatrical concepts such as dramaturgy, scenography, and choreography are used more and more to frame and analyse different artistic formats such as visual art, live art, and literature. For instance, Mikkel K. Frantzen, in his PhD dissertation, uses "scenes" to suggest a dramaturgy that seeks "to avoid a narrative of progress(ion) in favour of a more paratactic technique, which involves hesitant, lateral and crab-like movements", Mikkel K. Frantzen, "Going Nowhere, Slow: Scenes of Depression in Contemporary Literature and culture". (University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Humanities, 2017), 25. In my case the application of theatrical terms has less of a theoretical dimension than a practical dimension: that is, I think in dramaturgy, I act in composition, and I write in performative language.

ation, opening up new beginnings.

Itinerary

In Act 1 I contextualise research-based performance, I reflect on the first performance practice (*Precarious Life*), and I seek to develop the concept of research-based aesthetics.

In Chapter 1, "Research-Based Performance", I make a library of research-based performance. My concept frames the emergence of genres such as performance lecture, knowledge exchange performance, performance as exhibition, and documentary performance. These genres clearly show the research in the performances, they present thinking about a subject, and they invite the audience to reflect on the research represented. Though I do not offer a historical mapping, I do highlight five artistic gestures, which combine theory and artistic practice and point forward to research-based performance: conceptual art, performance art, documentary, Bertolt Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, and experimental art academies. Further, I draw a single line back to Joseph Beuys's performance *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), as a historical key example of the interconnection between art and knowledge and as a forerunner of research-based performance. The chapter serves as a methodological reflection pointing towards the first performance of my project, the performance lecture *Precarious Life*.

Between Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 the script of *Precarious Life* appears as the first example of my own research-based practice. The script performs theoretical, poetic, and autobiographical writing and demonstrates one way of doing research-based performance.

In Chapter 2, "*Precarious Life* as a Research-Based Performance", I describe the process of making the performance. I reflect on the structure of the piece and discuss the pitfalls and (un)expected potentials of using theory and research in a performance lecture. I use Derrida's notion of the autoimmunity of terror in order to construct the metaphorical link between terror as an autoimmune process and autoimmune disease as terror in the body. Drawing on sociologist Robert A. Nisbet's *Social Change and History*[57] and writer Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*,[58] I critically discuss my use of Derrida's concept of the autoimmunity of terror to create a metaphor. Against a back-

57 Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

58 Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978). See also Susan Sontag, *Aids and Its Metaphors* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989).

drop of philosopher Ernesto Laclau's and political theorist Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic* Politics,[59] I end up asking about the political potential of research-based performances that give room for different unheard voices.

In Chapter 3, "Research-Based Aesthetics", I think through theories about thinking, criticality, and knowledge flow to develop the concept of research-based aesthetics (see also the section on "Conceptualisation" in this introduction). Log entries from the work process appear as intermezzos. They point to the processual character of the conceptualisation, in which different experiences affected the thinking. The chapter thus also becomes a reflection on the artistic and theoretical articulation of knowledge.

In Act 2 I write about the process of the second performance practice, from the staged reading *I Love You You Love Me*[60] *to This is for her*. I write about my research on torture and therapy and reflect on the mirror movements between the two. I give space to other artworks, which formally or thematically inform my inquiry and come to play an important role in the making of and thinking about the performances. In the final chapter I examine how research-based artworks use affect, fact, and documentary strategies in order to represent research.

Act 2 begins with the script of *This is for her*. It was changed every day during the performance period, and as a result the version printed here struggles to maintain the changeable character of the piece.

In Chapter 4, "Torture, Therapy, and Testimony in *This is for her*", I discuss how to represent torture and therapy on stage in *This is for her*. The chapter follows the work process from the first moments of reading, writing, and working in the studio, over the staged reading *I Love You You Love Me*, to the performance *This is for her*. In this chapter I focus on *testimony* as a figure that travels between the people I interviewed, the script, the performance, the audience, and how in each of these instances a new layer of testimony arises. I use literary theorist Shoshana Felman's and psychologist Dori Laub's discussion of testimony in order to capture these different layers.[61] By extension I read literary theorist Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* in order to discuss whether torture can be seen as the unmaking of the victim's world

59 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

60 *I Love You You Love Me*, Dansehallerne (Copenhagen) 2015. The script is included as Appendix 1.

61 Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalyses, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

and therapy and art as the making of the victim's world.[62]

In Chapter 5, "Return and Repetition: Reenacting Scenes of Violence", I continue the exploration of torture and therapy from Chapter 4, focusing on how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib. After an introduction to my initial studio research, I relate my work to critical theory about representation and reenactment with a focus on how to respond to the photos, drawing on Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, and Rebecca Schneider.[63] I continue with an analysis of Candice Breitz's video installation *Love Story* (2016), in which Hollywood stars Julianne Moore and Alec Baldwin reenact and retell testimonies of refugees. Combining reflection on this artwork, my own work, and theory, I will demonstrate how my way of doing performance research is to think through these three modes of inquiry. In the end, I return to the question of how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib.

In Chapter 6, "Representing Research: Fact, Affect, Document", I propose that research-based artworks apply facts, affect, and documentary strategies in order to represent the researched and reflected material. I analyse two research-based artworks that use facts and affect, *77sqm_9:26min* (2017), by Forensic Architecture, and *Riding on a Cloud* (2013), by Rabih Mroué. The two works are not "documentaries", but they use and produce documents in order to construct or reconstruct reality. Documentary theorist Bill Nichols and visual artist and writer Hito Steyerl theoretically inform my discussion of documentary strategies.[64] I conclude by looking at fact, affect, and document in my own work and moreover by reflecting on the use of artistic research as a means to examine research-based performance.

In the Epilogue I end the itinerary by reflecting on the relation between art and research at the different levels of this project: artistic research, research-based aesthetics, and research-based performance. I ask about the democratic potential of research-based performance, linking it to Derrida's perception of democratic autoimmunity so present in this project. Finally, I return to the question about how to respond to the urgency predicated in the title: *Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis*.

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62 Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

63 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003); Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010); Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

64 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Hito Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty", *Re-visiones #One* (2011), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.re-visiones.net/spip.php%3Farticle37.html.

ACT I

1.

Research-Based Performance

Log: 24 October 2006

I go to the Hebbel am Ufer theatre in Berlin and watch the artist Walid Raad's *I Feel a Great Desire to Meet the Masses Once Again* (2005). It is framed as a "mixed-media lecture presentation". Through photos, maps, and illustrations Raad recounts his first journey from Lebanon to the US, when he was sixteen years old. In parallel we hear about the difficulties of travelling for people of Middle Eastern origin after 9/11. One day he is stopped at the airport in Rochester and questioned at length and has great difficulty explaining his artistic interest in car bombs and his collection of airline safety brochures. He is allowed to go, but the experience leads on to other, more serious stories, such as the case of artist Steve Kurtz, who was suspected of bioterrorism by the FBI, and several examples of young men who have been in the wrong place at the wrong time and ended up as prisoners in Guantánamo. At the end of the lecture Raad says that he will stay on stage for the next fifteen to twenty minutes if anybody has questions. According to Raad, the Q&A session is a fundamental element of the theatrics of academic lectures.[65]

I Feel a Great Desire to Meet the Masses Once Again is a mixture of documentary, reality, fiction, and fact. Raad works within a visual arts context, but his mixed-media lecture presentation crosses the thin line between visual art and performance. The lecture has strong visual material, it is presented in a theatre, and Raad is performing the lecture on stage. It is a research-based performance.

I had already had a similar experience with the Atlas Group's exhibition at Documenta 11 (2002).[66] What struck me back then was the blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction, so plausible that reality seemed to become a fiction and fiction a reality. Raad's artistic practice, inside and outside the Atlas Group, is based on real and fictional research.

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65 André Lepecki, "After All, This Terror Was Not without Reason: Unfiled Notes on the Atlas Group Archive", *The Drama Review* 50:3 (2006), 97.

66 The Atlas Group is a project established by Walid Raad in 1999 to research and document the history of Lebanon.

Log: 9 January 2015

I travel to Beirut to participate in a workshop led by Raad. After all it seems like this whole obsession with research-based formats began after seeing Raad's *I Feel a Great Desire to Meet the Masses Once Again*. However, some of the workshop is cancelled, and the rest of the time the speaker is not Raad himself but the curators and researchers whom he has invited to speak. So it becomes a rather indirect way of learning about Raad's practice – or interests. (I have a strong feeling of disappointment, a weird feeling, since it is neither ugly nor beautiful, just signifying an undefined loss.)

After a couple of days I get the chance to have a talk with him, and I prepare for it thoroughly. I want him to talk about the intersection between art and research, about thinking and doing, about subjective and objective strategies in art, and I want him to explain who he is in his work. He begins by saying that I cannot record the talk. And I realise that my prepared questions do not make so much sense then. So it becomes a talk about something else, or perhaps it is exactly about that. (It makes me think of Sianne Ngai's concept of thinking of gender and capital as "Meanwhile & And / at the same time".[67]) Afterwards I write down the conversation from memory.

Raad says that his current project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow – A History of Art in the Arab World* is a continuation of his earlier projects with the Atlas Group.[68] It is still about archives, about finding documents and looking at them. I tell him about my work, and he comes out with the observation that I always work with antagonistic concepts. I say "yes". He says that earlier he felt fine about thinking the subjective position through psychoanalysis – there is no negation in psyche, everything is "yes". He says that it is good that I am in a position where I am unable to speak in Beirut. He would be the same in Denmark. I say that there is nothing to talk about in Denmark. He says that there is both Greenland and Norway and the Antarctic and the David Collection. He would really like to see the David Collection, to see how the history of Islamic art is presented there. He talks about the philosopher Jalal Toufic and how he writes about death and vampires and other ways of understanding these concepts. He says that the theatre maker Rabih Mroué is interested in these concepts in another way when he explores the position of the

67 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 330.

68 See Walid Raad and Jalal Toufic, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Arab World/ Part I_volume 1_chapter 1 (Beirut: 1992–2005)* (Los Angeles, CA: Redcat, The California Institute of the Arts, 2009). Catalogue published in conjunction with Walid Raad's exhibition at REDCAT from 10 April to 14 June 2009.

martyr – how a martyr video shows a person who says he has become a martyr after his death. It is an impossible construction of time; the person speaks from a future subject position. Toufic claims that Beirut is the place where one can best think about these impossible subject positions.

Raad says that he is no longer satisfied with thinking the subjective position from a psychoanalytic perspective. This model is exhausted for him. Instead he thinks of a sensibility where things come to you and affect you in different ways. The whole time one has to negotiate different subjectivities in different ways – messianic, psychotic, neurotic – one has to go through different parameters for these positions and ask oneself: is this what I experience? He says that he is still interested in working with memory. When young artists today say that they don't want to work with history, that they want to look forward, it is mostly something they just say, since they still work with what happened in history. His current project focuses on the narratives created through the art institutions in the region. We suddenly make a jump and talk about how the situation in France after the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting will make the whole situation explode, and that it may be the art institutions that will be the ones to tell who the good Muslim is.

He says he has left the collective position of the Atlas Group in favour of a more subjective position. He wants to examine what it means to work alone. To experience things that can only be experienced alone. To get experiences, which are indivisible and cannot be shared. He wants to confront the aloneness and to find out which strategies are available when one is working from a singular position. I try to understand his concept of floating subject positions. I say that what I make is neither autobiographical truth nor fiction. But I don't understand what takes place in this space between the two positions. He (says that he is not interested in answering such a question but) suggests that I answer it with the psychoanalytic model: the work is neither autobiographical nor fictional because fiction and facts both appear real in consciousness.

His view on fiction or fictive strategies in the artwork is complex. When asked about the Atlas Group, he says: "Some facts can only come out as fiction. Certain emotions, feelings, and facts come out as fiction. The Atlas Group could not be a real archive. The archive has to be fictive to tell the story." I think this quote is emblematic for the field of research-based art: an artist working with archives and relative truths uses fiction as a way of approaching truth. Research-based art is characterised by the intersection of objectivity with subjectivity.

Figure 1, Walid Raad, from *I Feel a Great Desire to Meet the Masses Once Again*, 2005. Performance with slide show produced by the Atlas Group. © Walid Raad and courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Research-Based Performance Does Not Come Out of Nowhere

The notion of "art as research" and the art institution as a laboratory took off in the 1990s, especially within the visual arts.[69] The performing arts followed with labs in festivals and the appearance of new genres such as performance lecture, reality-based performance, knowledge exchange performance, and performance as exhibition. These genres use different research strategies by using theory, interviews, data, or historical documents, and they offer material and immaterial spaces for thinking.

Research-based performance does not come out of nowhere, but builds on many encounters between art and research through the twentieth century. However, it is difficult to locate the exact moment when these encounters became visible or tangible. I would argue that research-based art reflects both societal and artistic changes. On the one hand, the exchange between art and research mirrors the emergence of the information society in the 1970s. On the other, the use of research in artistic practice follows important artistic developments in the twentieth century, and thus it continues artistic streams that were already flowing. What happens now is that the meeting between art and research is so clearly staged and articulated in research-based art. The research is an integral part of the artistic practice and the artwork. It is strengthened and made visible. It is neither mystical nor hidden away. And it is by no means marginalised.

Research-based performance makes and un-makes knowledge, and this both challenges and confirms capitalist norms of productivity because it on the one hand proposes other modes of being and on the other fulfils the capitalist ideal of productivity. As theorist Mark Fisher has proposed, anti-capitalism no longer exists as the antithesis to capitalism. His well-known quote "it is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism", which he attributes to both Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek, identifies the principle of capitalist realism, which he describes in a double gesture: capitalism is both thought of as the only viable and economic system and at the same time it is impossible to imagine an alternative.[70] Turning to research-based performance, we may say that it overflows our common understanding of what knowledge can be, but at the same time this knowledge production can be seen as an overproduction that mim-

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69 See Nelund, *Acts of Research*; Biggs and Karlsson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*.

70 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books 2009), 2.

ics the capitalist production mode in knowledge-based societies. The inherent conflict between production modes and criticality is an important discussion to address continuously in research-based practice. In this study I propose that performance can be critical within the political, economic, and institutional system.

In this chapter I will carry out a methodological mapping, create a small library of research-based performance, in order to approach the different ways in which research is operated and acted out. I do not expand the discussion about productivity in knowledge production,[71] nor do I provide a historical mapping of how performance has used research.[72] I will, however, draw attention to a few important artistic gestures of the twentieth century which I think have influenced research-based performance: conceptual art, performance art, documentary, Bertolt Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, and experimental art academies such as Black Mountain College, which combine theory and artistic practice. In these artistic gestures the intersection between research/thinking and artistic practice may not be what first springs to mind, but they expose different features, which are present in research-based performance: focus on the artistic process, desire to react to the political reality, readiness to try out new formats in order to represent the artistic material, and interest in learning as an artist and as an audience. In the following I will briefly outline these five gestures.

Five Artistic Gestures Pointing towards Research-Based Performance

Conceptual art is created on the basis of a concept, which is more important than aesthetic, technical, and material concerns. Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt was one of the first to define conceptual art, and he points to the importance of the artistic process in which the concept is formulated. As he writes in his 1967 manifesto for *Artforum*:

> In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the

71 For more about the relations between thinking, non-thinking and knowledge production in art see Henk Borgdorff: "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research", in Biggs and Karlsson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge).

72 This outline will be very brief, given the focus of this dissertation. However, it would be interesting to dive into the many examples of art using research throughout art history, especially in the twentieth century, where so many known and less known performative art practices use research in different ways. A study of this field is eagerly awaited.

> execution is a perfunctory affair [...] If the artist carries through his idea and makes it into visible form, then all the steps in the process are of importance. The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product. All intervening steps – scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations – are of interest. Those that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product.[73]

LeWitt defines conceptual art and captures how the *presentation* of the artwork is less interesting than the *making* of the artwork. His focus on research in the artistic process may be used to understand the coming together of research and art in research-based performance. If we look at the quote above, I want to suggest that "idea" could be replaced with "research", thus pointing to the importance of the process in research-based artwork. As LeWitt points out, the process is an integral part of the artistic practice and, I would like to add, can be seen as artistic research. Conceptual and research-based art are both immersed in an investigation of a question, a form, or a problem. Further, research-based performance is occupied with the exploration and dissemination of research. The works I examine below are not closed in on themselves in a circuitous, self-referential process. The process is important, but so is the confrontation with an audience because it accommodates new collective spaces for thinking.

Performance art is an art form that historically began in the 1960s.[74] It primarily manifests itself in a fine art context, and the performance artist is often, but not always, the performer. Research-based performance uses artistic strategies developed within performance art. Often the performance artist is alone on stage – for instance, in performance lectures; many of the performances fit both in theatres and in gallery spaces, such as performance installations, performance exhibitions, and knowledge exchange performances; and several of the performances do not work with a fixed temporality.

Documentary theatre and film have a long history. Theorist Bill Nichols has pointed out that "documentary is what we might call a fuzzy

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73 Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", *Artforum* 5 (1967), 79–83.

74 Performance art is a contested concept. Marvin Carlson argues that the concept "performance" stems from the art practice of the 1960s and since then has been studied within anthropology, ethnography, sociology, psychology, and theatre and performance studies. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

concept".[75] The use of "documentary" as an aesthetic category has been changed and redefined, depending on context and usage, since filmmaker John Grierson first defined it as "the creative interpretation of actuality" (1933) in his review of Robert Flaherty's film *Moana*.[76] However, the "actuality films" made by the Lumière brothers from 1895 onwards already demonstrate documentary traits in their use of footage filming, for instance, workers leaving a factory at the end of the day.[77] Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the genre has developed continuously in new directions, troubling the original understanding of the term.

In regard to theatre it is a term spanning decades from the critical theatre of Erwin Piscator and Brecht in the 1920s, through Peter Weiss and Peter Brook in the 1960s, to the verbatim theatre of the 1980s, in which interviews with people are turned into a performance.[78] Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson continue the historical trajectory, proposing that documentary modes of performance-making have had a revival since the early 1990s to react to new socio-political realities.[79] This coincides with the appearance of research-based performance as a way of examining political crisis on stage, which proliferated after 9/11 and the War on Terror. As Carol Martin argues, "much post-9/11 documentary theatre is etched with the urgency of the struggle over the future of the past".[80] The upsurge of documentary theatre has been visible in many formats, such as witness and testimony theatre, tribunal plays, reenactment, and archive performance. Solveig Gade proposes to distinguish between two strands of contemporary documentary, where the first "represents an almost positivist, realist faith in facts, [and] the second [...] is defined by a consistent intermingling

75 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 21.

76 John Grierson, "The Documentary Producer", *Cinema Quarterly* 2 (1933), 7–9. For more on Grierson's definition see Susan Kerrigan and Phillip McIntyre, "The 'Creative Treatment of Actuality': Rationalizing and Reconceptualizing the Notion of Creativity for Documentary Practice", *Journal of Media Practice* 11 (2010), 111–30.

77 Lumière, *La sortie des usines* (1895).

78 Derek Paget, *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre*, ed. Colin Chambers (London: Continuum, 2002). An important contemporary exponent is Hans-Werner Krösinger, who defines his theatre work as documentary. See "Kroesinger", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.kroesinger.com/home/hans-werner-kroesinger/. In a Danish context the two theatre performance collectives Global Stories and Paradox Intertainment, which both work with documentary strategies to investigate social and political dilemmas. "Paradox", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.paradoxteater.dk/paradox.html. "Global Stories", accessed 14 January 2019, http://globalstories.net/home/about-us/

79 Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (eds.), *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

80 Carol Martin, "Bodies of Evidence", in Carol Martin (ed.), *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 17.

of found and invented documents".[81] This distinction is relevant for the performances that will be mentioned here, although the boundaries between the two strands are not fixed entities. Here I will look at research-based documentary because the use of research is so evident in the format and because it so clearly works with disruptions of its own genre. Further, a recurrent discussion in this dissertation is how to *document* the researched material, and in this discussion documentary strategies play an important role.

Lehrstücke (learning-plays[82]) are experimental theatre pieces developed from the 1920s to the 1930s. They are related to Brecht's epic theatre techniques and have a strong focus on learning through acting and discussion. The aim is to dissolve the division between actors and audience and between actions and thinking, which means that the process becomes more important than the final product. Many of the research-based performances that we will look at here unfold learning-play logic, emphasising process, the lack of a division between actor and audience, and a strong focus on thinking and research. They employ strategies developed in the epic theatre such as documentary effects, audience interaction, and *Verfremdungseffekte*.[83] Further, they respond to political conflicts of the time in a way that echoes practitioners of epic theatre such as Piscator and Brecht.[84]

The last artistic gesture I want to highlight is the development of *alternative forms of learning* within arts education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For instance, Black Mountain College was an experimental art college active from 1933 to 1957, which had an interdisciplinary, holistic approach and focused on art-making as a necessary part of education.[85] More recently there have been several experimental learning interventions, such as Henriette Heise's and

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81 Solveig Gade, "The Promise of the Index in Contemporary Documentary Performance", *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 55–56 (2018), 47.

82 Brecht's own translation. For more on Brecht's learning-plays see Reiner Steinweg (ed.), *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke. Zeugnisse, Discussionen, Erfahrungen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), 140.

83 The *Verfremdungseffekt* ("distancing effect", also known as the "alienation effect" or "estrangement effect") is a concept coined by Brecht to describe a technique used to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the performance, reminding them of the artificiality of the theatre. In the text "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" (1936) he describes how the intention is to hinder the audience from identifying with the characters in the play. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964). I will use the German term here.

84 Piscator coined the term "epic theatre" in 1924. See Timothy Wiles, *The Theatre Event* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1980). Piscator characterised his work as scientific: "conclusive proof can be based only on scientific analysis of the material." See Gade, "The Promise of the Index", 46. The quote is from Erwin Piscator, "The Documentary Play", in Attilio Favorini (ed.), *Voicings: Ten Plays from the Documentary Theatre* (Hopewell, NJ: The Echo Press, 1995), 8.

85 See "Black Mountain College," accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.blackmountaincollege.org.

Jakob Jakobsen's Copenhagen Free University,[86] Anton Vidokle's *unitednationsplaza*,[87] or A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.,[88] to mention just a few.[89] Within a performing arts context it is worth mentioning universities that offer applied theatre studies, such as the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen[90] and the Institute for Media, Theatre, and Popular Culture in Hildesheim.[91] None of the performances that I will discuss here is framed as an experimental learning intervention. However, they all bring together theory and practice, and as such they perform a rupture with traditional forms of thinking. Further, several of the artists and artists' groups mentioned here come from mixed educational backgrounds combining practice and theory.[92]

I consider the examples mentioned above as artistic approaches that have influenced research-based performance. Conceptual art and performance art relate to a fine arts context, documentary to a theatre and film context, *Lehrstücke* to a (epic) theatre context, and experimental learning interventions to an educational context. These influences are not all present or visible in research-based performances, but they circulate as residues in the artworks. The five artistic influences stem from different moments in the twentieth century, and this temporality is important because it points to how different strings develop. In the following I will zoom in on a moment in the 1960s and point to the artist Joseph Beuys as an example of how the entanglement between art and thinking in an artistic practice unfolds.[93]

Is *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* a Research-Based Performance?

Beuys used learning strategies as well as artistic strategies in his artis-

86 See Nelund, *Acts of Research*, 219–26.

87 See "United Nations Plaza", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/.

88 See Nollert et al. (eds.), *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.*

89 For an insightful discussion of learning and pedagogy in art see Claire Bishop, "Pedagogic Projects: 'How Do You Bring a Classroom to Life as if It Were a Work of Art?'", in *Artificial Hells* (London: Verso, 2012), 241–74.

90 "Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.inst.uni-giessen.de/theater/.

91 "Das Institut für Medien, Theater und Populäre Kultur", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/fb2/institute/medien-theater-populaerekultur/.

92 An example is Ivana Müller, who has an interdisciplinary educational background: comparative literature at the University of Zagreb, choreography and dance at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam, and Fine Arts at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. "Ivana Müller", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.ivanamuller.com/biographies/.

93 Beuys has been connected to the emergence of performance lecture as a genre. See, for instance, Marianne Wagner, "Doing Lectures, Performative Lectures as a Framework for Artistic Action", in Jenny Dirksen (ed.), *Lecture Performance* (Berlin: Revolver, 2009). The book includes several essays and artistic contributions.

tic practice. He made happenings, performances, sculptures, installations, theory, as well as teaching. His famous statement "teaching is my greatest work of art"[94] shows the importance he attached to his pedagogic role educating his students and audience. His performance *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965[95]) incarnates several of the traits characteristic of research-based performance. In the performance, Beuys spent three hours explaining his art to a dead hare with his head covered with honey and gold leaf. Before the performance began, Beuys locked the gallery doors from the inside, which meant that the audience watched the performance through the windows without being able to hear what Beuys said to the hare. After three hours the audience was let in. In explaining the performance, Beuys relates his use of honey to thinking:

> Mit Honig auf dem Kopf tue ich natürlich etwas, was mit Denken zu tun hat. Die menschliche Fähigkeit ist nicht, Honig abzugeben, sondern zu denken, Ideen abzugeben, Dadurch wird der Todescharacter des Gedankens wieder lebendig gemacht. Denn Honig ist zweifellos eine lebendige Substanz. Der menschliche Gedanke kann auch lebendig sein. Er kann aber auch intellektualisierend tödlich sein auch tot bleiben [...].[96]

In this quote he underlines the importance of thinking through art without intellectualising the subject matter. The ritualistic character of the performance (the honey, the hare, and the gold) produced a completely different way of explaining art through an action that was inaudible for the audience because they were outside the gallery. *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, with its mixture of art and thinking, can be seen as an early example of research-based performance. It creates a space for thinking even if this space is not defined by audible words. The silence is connected to the conceptual character of the performance: it explores how difficult it is to explain and understand things, and it does so by literally obstructing the act of explaining and understanding.

How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare is one of Beuys's best-known performances and represents his extended definition of art. It is situ-

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94 Willoughby Sharp, "An Interview with Joseph Beuys", *Artforum* 8:4 (1969).

95 *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (*Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt*) was performed on 26 November 1965 at the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf. See Allan Antliff, *Joseph Beuys* (London and New York: Phaidon, 2014).

96 Götz Adriani et al., *Joseph Beuys: Leben und Werk* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1981).

ated within a fine arts context, it is conceptual, it uses documents (his artworks, which he describes to the dead hare), it has a pedagogical dimension, and it has spiritual elements inspired by anthroposophy. Several of these traits are present in contemporary research-based performance. However, there are also clear differences. Not many research-based art practices today have a formulated pedagogical intention, and not many work with ritualistic elements in the way that Beuys did.[97]

Further, I see a shift in the way the artists politically engage their performance work. The examples mentioned above were critical reactions to existing structures in the society and in the art institution: politics and education (Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, Beuys's performances, and experimental academies), commodification of the art market (performance art), traditional artistic principles (conceptual art), and the representation of reality (documentary). Contemporary research-based performance is critical, but it performs another role because it both challenges and confirms the demands of the (art) market. Research-based performance presents critical thinking, and the (art) market demands critical thinking, even if it is critical towards itself.[98] Thus, it seems to me that the institutional, representational, and political critique is not as outspoken as in the historical examples above. Rather, there is a focus on how to respond critically to conflict and crisis and how to find new modes of representation that can make art make sense.

Before turning to contemporary research-based performance, it is important to mark a distinction between what I label research-based performance and performance that uses research in the production process. An example of the latter is theatre that uses research to build

97 Of course, there are many exceptions. A noteworthy example is the piece *Vote Zombie Andy Beuyz* (2008), by Showcase Beat Le Mot, in which the group performs ritualistic elements partly hidden outside a scenographic structure in which the audience can perform their critical engagement with the surrounding. See "Showcase Beat Le Mot, *Vote Zombie Andy Beuyz*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.showcasebeatlemot.de/de/kritiken_9.html. For pedagogical (and political invested) learning interventions reference could be made to The Center for Political Beauty, which describes itself as "an assault team that establishes moral beauty, political poetry and human greatness while aiming to preserve humanitarianism". See "The Center for Political Beauty", accessed 14 January 2019, https://politicalbeauty.com/index.html, or the performance artist Andreas Liebmann, whose artistic practice has been described as "social sculpture" and "performative structure". See Mette Garfield, "Scenekunstnerisk udvikling og aktivisme som social skulptur og performativ struktur", *Peripeti*, accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.peripeti.dk/2018/11/02/imaginations-of-a-place-taarnby-torv-festival/. Also worth mentioning are theatre director Christoph Schlingensief's theatre works, political actions, and performative installations, which break down the barriers between life, work, and activism. See, for instance, his groundbreaking Big Brother camp for asylum seekers in Vienna, *Bitte liebt Österreich* (2000), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt_eng.php?id=t033.

98 In Chapter 3 I will return to this dilemma, arguing that it is possible to be critical within the structures of the system.

a storyline or create a credible setting. In this case the research is used to obtain realism and not to question knowledge or create reflection within the performance situation. Realism makes it possible to be absorbed in the work and to believe in the world depicted. Obviously, this does not exclude thinking (there is thinking in realism), but the research is not exposed to view. The research-based performances that I will discuss below are not interested in absorption, though some of them use realistic strategies such as reenactments of spaces and human actions. However, these strategies do not create fictional realism but are, rather, used to question our perception of real historical events. In many cases the performance uses *Verfremdungseffekte* that distance us from the action and makes us aware that this is not real.

I define research-based performance as art that creates different modes of knowing and thinking, and aesthetic spaces for reflection that go far beyond putting theories on stage. A few works will mark the contours of research-based performance.

Library of Research-Based Performance

In this short library of research-based performance, I intend to give an overview, which will make it possible to compare different productions. An important question is whether it is possible to cover such a broad spectrum. There is a risk of including "too many" performances in this category. If the concept becomes so open that it can comprise every different type of performances, the distinctive value disappears, or at least it is not about describing a specific way of working but rather about describing an artistic "trend" spreading through the performance landscape. However, the aim here is to show that there *are* different ways of working with research, and therefore it is necessary to include a variety of formats and not to focus on one specific genre such as the performance lecture, even if it appears to be the most obvious form of representing research through performance. Throughout the catalogue I will use examples to point to the challenges embedded in research-based performance in relation to the role of the artist, the relation between audience and artwork, and how to define research. I have deliberately chosen examples covering the whole period from the 1990s until today, rather than only focusing on recent examples. The library is to be seen as a selection of works each representing larger bodies of work.

Performance as lecture

Lecture performance or *performance lecture* mixes artistic and subjective strategies with research. There is no rule for when to use the term "lecture performance" and when to use the term "performance lecture". Performing arts, which emphasise the performance dimension, tend to use the term "performance lecture", while performance art and visual art, which emphasise the lecture dimension, tend to use the term "lecture performance". I use the term "performance lecture" in order to emphasise the performative dimension of the lecture situation.[99] Often autobiographical elements are used together with objective facts.[100] Marianne Wagner captures the metabolic dynamics between research and art arguing that in the "*lecture performance* half knowledge, invention and fiction in the treatment of truth play a fundamental role. In contrast to scholarship, the artistic *lecture performance* is an ideal framework within which to test our knowledge."[101] Performance lectures are characterised by building on a research question, which also marks the starting point of academic research. Ivana Müller's *How Heavy Are My Thoughts* (2003) is a clear example of how performance lecture both mimics academic formats and contradicts them.[102] Here the research question is built into the title and it reveals that we are confronted not with a traditional academic research question but with a question that prompts artistic and poetic reflections on the linguistic expression "heavy thoughts".

Xavier le Roy's *Product of Circumstances* (1999)[103] is often mentioned as an example that marked the arrival of the genre.[104] Le Roy describes his work as an "autobiographic conference" that becomes a performance. He uses choreography and autobiography to turn movement into theory. It is worth quoting his description of *Product of Circumstances* in full:

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99 The genre performance lecture will be described and discussed further in Chapter 2.

100 For an expanded definition and a historical contextualization of the genre see Jenny Dirksen, "Ars Academia – The Lecture between Artistic and Academic Discourse", in Dirksen (ed.), *Lecture Performance*.

101 Wagner, "Doing Lectures", in Dirksen (ed.), *Lecture Performance*, 21.

102 "Ivana Müller, *How Heavy Are My Thoughts*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.ivanamuller.com/works/how-heavy-are-my-thoughts/.

103 "Xavier le Roy, *Product of Circumstances*," accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.xavierleroy.com/page.php?sp=5ff3b0bfa8cfe85dab0293c2ce0dd7ca7be0a037&lg=en.

104 When *Product of Circumstances* is mentioned as one of the first performance lectures, it is important to clarify that it marks a wave of performance lectures that have swept the art market over the last twenty years. However, it is possible to find examples of similar modes of expression before, such as the performance *How To Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, by Joseph Beuys, discussed earlier.

> Circumstances: I began to take two dance classes a week at the same time that I started to work on my thesis for my PhD in molecular and cellular biology. It's been now eight years that I have submitted my thesis and stopped to work as a biologist. Since I work as a dancer or choreograph I am very often presented as an atypical dancer or as a dancer molecular biologist. It became my currency in the "Society of the Spectacle". I was invited to prepare and present a lecture for an event on theory and praxis in performance ("Body currency" Wiener Festwochen June 1998).
> Product: Biography as theory. An autobiographical conference becoming a performance. My body as raw material of social and cultural organization and as the practice of critical necessity.[105]

Xavier le Roy has been labelled a dancer and molecular biologist, to give him value on the art market. This makes the dilemma of the research-based artist clear. On the one hand, research is presented as a currency, a demand from the art market. On the other hand, it allows the development of an artistic practice where biography can be transformed into theory and the body can be used as a critical tool.

Figure 2, Rabih Mroué, from *Pixelated Revolution*, 2012. Non-academic lecture. © Sfeir-Semler Gallery.

105 "Xavier le Roy, *Product of Circumstances*".

Rabih Mroué's *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012)[106] is a performance lecture about the civilians' documentation of death and violence during the first year of the Syrian civil war. It is based on photographic material found on the Internet. It was presented at dOCUMENTA 13 (2012) and has been touring since then. In many ways it appears to be a classical performance lecture, although Mroué himself calls it a "non-academic lecture". He is sitting at a table projecting video documentation on a screen behind him. Why is this not just a normal lecture? It is not a normal lecture because of various elements: the way the visual material is used, the subjective perspective, and the framing of it as a non-academic lecture.[107]

Of the above-mentioned artists it is only Ivana Müller who calls her work a lecture performance. The others use descriptions such as "autobiographic conference" (le Roy), "non-academic lecture" (Mroué), and "mixed-media lecture-presentation" (Raad). These differentiations demonstrate that the artists do not want to be constrained by a definition. Furthermore, the name "lecture performance" (or "performance lecture") has been somewhat diluted because it has been used loosely about very different works. (Anything and everything can be a performance lecture.) The same can be said about the term "research-based". However, my intention is not to define a genre but to outline a way of working. I want to show how the concept facilitates different artistic approaches.

Knowledge Exchange Performance

"Knowledge exchange performance" is a term that I use to describe performances in which knowledge is made and exchanged between the different participants. These exchanges can unfold as a one-on-one performance between a spectator and a performer,[108] in a space with many spectators and performers,[109] in a space with only spectators, or in a space with many spectators and experts. Here I will highlight an example of the latter showing how the act of exchanging

106 For more on the performance see Rabih Mroué and Carol Martin, "The Pixelated Revolution", *The Drama Review* 56:3 (2012), 18–35.

107 For a thorough analysis of "acts of research" in *The Pixelated Revolution,* see Nelund, *Acts of Research*, 107–18.

108 For instance, the theatre group Cantabile 2 creates Human Specific Performances in which there are often encounters between one performer and one spectator. See "Cantabile 2", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.cantabile2.dk/en/.

109 For instance, the performance *Entropic Institute* (2012), by the duo deufert&plischke, is a performance installation where artists, theoreticians, and spectators collaborate in making a temporal and site-specific choreographic environment. See "A deufert&plischke institute", accessed 14 January 2019, https://deufertandplischke.net/entropic-institute.

Figure 3, Mobile Academy, from *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge - Nr. 10* "Who will have been to blame", Vienna 2008.
© Dorothee Wimmer.

knowledge becomes a performance.

Mobile Academy's *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge* is a project by Hannah Hurtzig, with varying collaborators.[110] Since 2005 it has been produced in various art institutions with different themes. In the performance room there are between twelve and 100 individual tables. Sitting at each table is an expert. The experts may be scientists, craftsmen, artists, philosophers, or others who know something about the chosen theme. As an audience you can book a thirty-minute conversation with one of the experts in which you will exchange knowledge in a dialogue. Moreover, the audience can follow some of the conversations as a live radio broadcast transmitted in the theatre as the event unfolds.

I first experienced *Blackmarket* at the Hebbel am Ufer theatre in November 2006. The title of this version was *It's a Bird! It's a Plane. It's*

110 "Mobile Academy, *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/englisch/2005/schwarzm.html.

Superman … American Close-Ups in 440 Dialogues.[111] As the title suggests, *Blackmarket* presented experts with different sorts of knowledge about the US. I booked two conversations, one with a queer theoretician and another one with an elderly woman who had emigrated to New York as a young German Jew and was now visiting Berlin for the first time in more than sixty years. I was confronted with both queer theory and affective knowledge about the historical and political conditions of a woman's life. The experience was about engaging with knowledge in the encounter between a spectator and an expert, the two becoming experts of the performance situation that they create, their common space of thinking. We may moreover see this encounter as a possibility for exchanging thoughts and knowledge, a way of letting thinking travel between two mind-sets. Mobile Academy describes their understanding of knowledge as follows:

> The 21st Century is regarded as the age of Information, in which knowledge takes the part of an economical, political and cultural resource. The idea of knowledge as a continually growing and spontaneously retrievable entity however, does not take into account the performative character of knowledge nor does it acknowledge its borders or the radical changes that the idea has experienced throughout history. Knowledge – it seems – needs to be seen as a hybrid concept. As a form of storage it works with principles of representation, discourse, and archive. As a form of performance it uses techniques, practices, and experiences in/of the body of the learning individual. Finally knowledge appears as mirror-image of its seeming opposite: ignorance and belief.[112]

As is clear, *Blackmarket* is charged with the politics of knowledge and the possibilities and limits of the distribution of research, thereby questioning who can know what and how – the distribution of the sensible, to recapture Rancière's politics of aesthetics.

Documentary Performance

Documentary performance builds on reality. The research performed is the observation, representation, and distortion of our common reality. Thus, documentary performance is research-based, but doc-

111 "Mobile Academy, *It's a Bird! It's a Plane. It's Superman… American Close-Ups in 440 Dialogues*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/englisch/2006/schw_no06.html.

112 "Mobile Academy, *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*".

umentary performance does not necessarily work directly with the production or questioning of knowledge, as is the case with a performance lecture or knowledge exchange performance. Documentary performance extends from the staging of real people and their stories to the reenactment of subjective realities by actors, examples of which I will give below. I have found it necessary to include examples from both ends of the scale in order to point to the variety of the format and to show why I consider this format research-based performance. I will use subheadings to suggest how they differ.

Rimini Protokoll is a group consisting of Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi, and Daniel Wetzel, who have been working as a team since 2000.[113] They work with "experts of the everyday", and their performances are based on extensive research. An example is the 2013 production *Situation Rooms*, which leads the spectator through twenty narratives of different people whose stories are connected to weapons, be it through the arms industry, war, crime, or politics. The title refers to the White House Situation Room and specifically to the photograph of thirteen people, among them Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and high-ranking military personnel, during the final manhunt of Osama Bin Laden in 2011.[114]

The spectator is guided with an iPad and headphones through an extensive set design comprising various scenes in different rooms: an arms fair, a backyard in Syria, a Doctors Without Borders clinic, a graveyard in Mexico, and more. There are twenty spectators, who follow one story at a time. After ten minutes they follow one of the other stories. As a spectator you are completely embedded in the experience and so close to the biographies of the people depicted that it is difficult to judge them immediately.

In other performances by Rimini Protokoll the experts are present on stage. Here they are only present through their stories and as nearly invisible guides on the iPads. We are incredibly close to and yet very far away from the narratives of weapons and war. Close, because we walk in the footsteps of and with the stories of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. And far away, because we do not see them, and this distance creates a space for reflection. Our constant shift between distance and proximity mirrors the basic condition and challenge of the information society: we see conflict and crisis documented more

113 "Rimini Protokoll", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/.

114 The White House Situation Room is a conference room in the basement of the White House. It is used to monitor and deal with crises at home and abroad. See "The White House Museum", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.whitehousemuseum.org/west-wing/situation-room.htm.

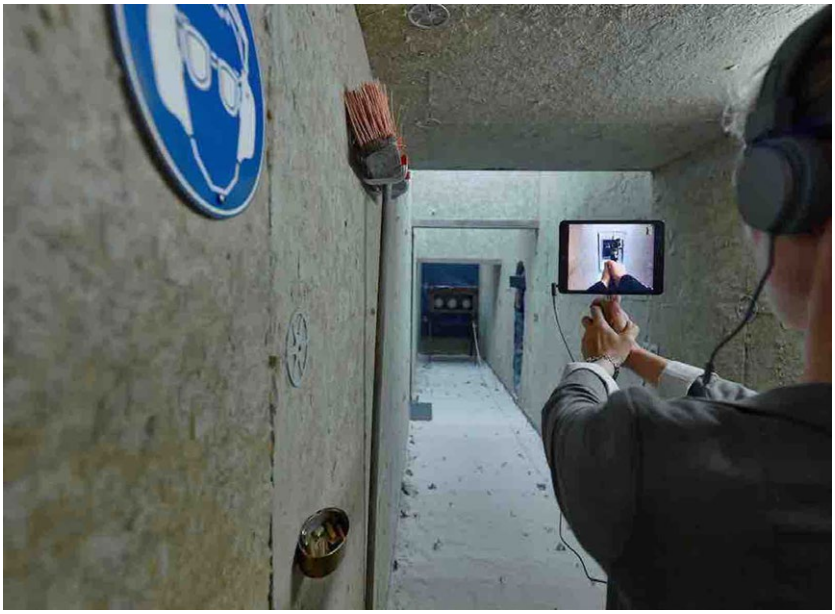

Figure 4, Rimini Protokoll, from *Situation Rooms*, 2013. A multiplayer video piece.
© Jörg Baumann

than ever before – but we are still bystanders. This dilemma plays a crucial role in documentary performance, where we are close but still far away from reality. There is no clear statement in *Situation Room*. The performance keeps the documentary mode of laying out material with a clear intention but without formulating a statement of what to think.

Hate Radio – The Re-enactment of an RTLM Genocide Radio Show (2011), directed by Milo Rau and produced by International Institute of Political Murder,[115] stages a radio show by Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. On stage is the reconstructed radio studio with its hosts: three Hutu extremists and the white Italian-Belgian Georges Ruggiu. Actors perform these real-life characters. The audience listens to the live broadcast through small radio transmitters. At the end of the performance the walls of the studio are used as projection screens for a video installation with selected stories from former perpetrators and victims.

Hate Radio includes the concept "reenactment" in its title. Importantly, the radio show consists of edited text material from different

115 "The International Institute of Political Murder was founded at the end of 2007 to strengthen exchange between theatre, the fine arts, film and research about re-enactment – the re-production of historical events – as well as to reflect upon the theoretical aspects of this exchange." See "Hate Radio", accessed 14 January 2019, http://international-institute.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Press-Kit_Hate-Radio_11_08_02.pdf.

broadcasts, which means that it is not a 1:1 reenactment, which reproduces one specific broadcast word by word and gesture by gesture. Rather, the performance reflects reality through an edited repetition stating: this is what it looked like; this is how it sounded, when the genocide was taking place.

Having actors playing real people and editing the historical material before it is reenacted works against a traditional idea of documentary.[116] In Copenhagen *Hate Radio* was presented together with the documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012), by Joshua Oppenheimer.[117] In this film Oppenheimer get former Indonesian death-squad leaders to tell their stories while at the same time reenacting their mass-killings in different cinematic genres. The horror of the theme does not lose any emotional weight as a result of the melodramatic effect of musical and *film noir* reenactments. Documentary performances such as *Hate Radio* and documentary films like *The Act of Killing* suggest a turn towards affective and subjective strategies in the search for documenting reality. *Hate Radio* is a work that is not occupied with knowledge production at a meta-level. Rather, it works on the production of reality in the public sphere. The reenactment and fictionalisation of historical events in a theatrical context create a space for reflection and new knowledge about the genocide in Rwanda. I have included the film under the heading "Documentary Performance", but it could as well have been in the next category, of reenactment. Reenactment always contains some element of documentation as it seeks to document past events.

Reenacting Real People

Reenactments are known from a number of artistic and cultural fields: for instance, historical reenactments of past events[118] or artistic reenactments of past performances.[119] I have chosen to make a separate category of "reenacting real people" because it is a format that is used by many research-based performances to convey researched material. Further, reenactment will play an important role in this

116 Importantly, International Institute of Political Murder defines itself not as documentary theatre but as a "new form of political art that is highly condensed in documentary and aesthetic terms – 'Real-Theater,' in the words of Alexander Kluge". See "About IIPM", accessed 14 January 2019, http://international-institute.de/en/about-iipm-2/.

117 "The Act of Killing", accessed 14 January 2019, http://theactofkilling.com/.

118 In *Performing Remains* Schneider writes engagingly about the widespread Civil War reenactments in the US.

119 Such as Marina Abramović's reenactment of Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* in 2005 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York as part of her series *Seven Easy Pieces*. See "Guggenheim, *Seven Easy Pieces*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/.

project because I use it in my second performance, *This is for her*, and because I reflect on it in Chapter 5 below. *Hate Radio* uses reenactment as well as documentary strategies. The two examples I have chosen here use reenactment in different ways. The performances are based on comprehensive interviews with real people.

Eszter Salamon's *Melodrama* (2012) is a solo performance in which Salamon reenacts interviews she made in 2006 and 2012 with a sixty-two-year-old Hungarian woman who shares her name.[120] Salamon retells the life story of the other Eszter Salamon while also reenacting her gestures and intonation. In the course of a couple of hours we hear about her life as a woman, wife, mother, lover, and employee, and at the same time we get an indirect portrait of Hungary during this period. *Melodrama* is clearly based on research, but how does it create a space for thinking? The performance is about sharing narratives. The critical gesture of presenting the material and sharing knowledge about the life of a woman and of a country produces new insights. *Melodrama* questions how we formulate and perceive a life story. The staging makes us question our understanding of autobiography and the possibilities of representing a person. The doubling of characters – Eszter performing Eszter – is a way of pointing to the performativity of subjectivity and identity, how we inhabit conventions of age, gender, nationality, and background.

Some of the same strategies, but with a very different result, are at stake in Nature Theater of Oklahoma's *Life and Times*, episodes 1–5 (2009–13) and 7–9 (2015).[121] *Life and Times* retells a life. Director Pavol Liska asked company member Kristin Worrall to tell her life story. It took ten phone calls and sixteen hours, and it is these sixteen hours that are transferred to the stage without any editing but with new formal obstructions for each episode.[122] The text is not edited and the amount of "uhs" in the oral telephone narration sometimes exceeds the actual content of the sentences. *Melodrama* succeeds by the seemingly exact but obviously edited recounting of a life. *Life and Times* succeeds by the opposite strategy: the detailed, non-edited retelling of a life, which inevitably will lead to a broken narrative, because we

120 See, "Eszter Salamon, *Melodrama*", accessed 14 January 2019, https://esztersalamon.net/Melodrama.

121 See "Nature Theater of Oklohoma", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.oktheater.org/oktheater.

122 Episode 1 is staged as a musical/opera. Episode 2 is a dance piece. Episodes 3 and 4 are staged as a melodramatic murder mystery. Episode 4.5 is an animated film, and episode 5 is a hand-drawn book, which is handed out for the audience to read. Episode 7 is a black-and-white film. Episode 8 is a musical film, and episode 9 is a rap video.

never tell anything in a straightforward and unbroken language. Both performances offer a reflection on the boundaries of self, but where *Melodrama* presents itself as a documentary performance, *Life and Times* presents its documentary material in many different genres, erasing the indexicality of the original phone call. I would still argue that it is research-based – it is just not presented as such.

Performance as exhibition

"Performance exhibition" is a term that I use to describe performances that use the format, set design, and rules of an exhibition. Performance, theatre, and dance have become an increasingly established part of art institution programmes in the last twenty years and have challenged the notion of the artwork as a stable, durable object. Parallel to this development, the performing arts have hijacked formats such as exhibition and installation. Artists from the performing arts have worked with an altered temporality and an extended timeframe – for example, in durational performances – that escapes the closed nature of performance and flirts with the possibility of the viewer returning to the work, not as a finished experience but as an on-going investigation. Curators and artists from the fine arts work with notions such as choreography, set design, and rehearsal, while dramaturges and artists from the performing arts work with processual formats and try to transcend the traditional representational categories by talking about post-dramatic theatre or choreography in an expanded field.[123]

An example of a research-based performance exhibition is *Expo Zéro*, by Boris Charmatz and Musée de la Danse.[124] It is a performative exhibition without objects, consisting of thoughts and movement.[125] In Berlin, where I experienced it, a group of ten artists, choreographers, and theoreticians had been working together for a week in a "think-tank" exploring the question: what is a museum of dance,

123 A number of choreographers have shown their work in museums. Xavier Le Roy's *Retrospective* (2012) is an exhibition in the form of choreography performed by dancers for the duration of the exhibition. See "Xavier Le Roy, *Retrospective*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.xavierleroy.com/page.php?sp=2d6b21a02b428a09f2ebd3d6cbaf2f6be1e3848d&lg=en. Another example is Tino Sehgal, who makes "constructed situations" in museums in which "interpreters" perform, dance, talk, or discuss for and with the visitors of the museum. There is no documentation of his work. It exists in the now and in the memory of the spectators. For more see this interview: Lauren Collins, "The Question Artist", *The New Yorker* (12 August 2006), accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/08/06/the-question-artist.

124 "Musée de la Danse, *Expo Zéro*, accessed 14 January 2019, http://expozero.museedeladanse.org.

125 I experienced *Expo Zéro* in Berlin at the Foreign Affairs Festival (2014). The participating artists and theorists were Claire Bishop, Boris Charmatz, Tim Etchells, Hu Fang, Mette Ingvartsen, Pichet Klunchun, Rabih Mroué, David Riff, Shelley Senter, and Meg Stuart.

what could or should it be? So the research in question consisted both of the work created during the week together and of the research that each artist brought to the process. After the week a temporary museum of dance was created where the audience could move freely while the participating artists, choreographers, and theoreticians moved, talked, or improvised in an arranged choreography. The press release for one of the first editions of Expo Zéro (2010) in BAK, Utrecht, outlines the intention:

> The project attempts to go beyond a populist affirmation of "free" spaces of encounter and proposes a decidedly political re-thinking of the organization of knowledge, systems of power, and institutional frameworks in society. What it offers the audience are not the empty ticket stubs of uncritical, neoliberal participation, but it rather allows and invites for scenarios of empowerment.[126]

Who is empowered: the curator, the artist, or the spectator? And what exactly is "uncritical, neoliberal participation"? When I experienced it at the art gallery Kunstsaele in Berlin I felt free to move, but I had moments where I felt that I was at a social gathering for a small circle of people who knew each other, and this made it hard to see scenarios of empowerment. And on one occasion I experienced an opposition between a desire to think among the audience and the thought-fatigue of one of the participating thinkers.

It was in a room with the theorist Claire Bishop. A discussion on participation had developed. The audience clearly wanted to continue, especially since the expert in participation was present.[127] Suddenly Bishop got up and said, "Shouldn't we just dance?" and started dancing. Some followed her example while others remained still, possibly hoping that the discussion would begin again. *Nothing wrong with dancing.* What is interesting is the "just" in her statement. "Shouldn't we *just* dance?" Was she bored? Did she not think that the exhibition space was suited for thinking? Did she assume that we would have more fun dancing? (Thinking might be boring. Boredom might lead to thinking.) It is worth asking whether Bishop would get up at a conference in a university in the middle of a discussion on participation and say "Shouldn't we just dance?" As choreographer and scholar

126 See "e-flux, expo-zero", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/expo-zero/.

127 Bishop is the author of *Artificial Hells*, a historical and theoretical examination of participatory art.

Susan Leigh Foster has shown, it is possible to dance a lecture in the conference room.[128] The question is which performative gesture has the potential of breaking the rules of knowledge in different spaces. *Expo Zéro* performs research, but at the same time it displays a challenge to research-based performance: it closes itself around itself. (Self-absorption?) The performance does not respond to conflict and crisis in the way the other examples do. Here the "problem" is formulated as a need to find out how to think through choreography.

Performance Installation

I use the term "Performance installation" to describe performances that combine installation and performance in a single artwork. Unlike the "performance exhibition", we are not confronted with several works brought together by a curatorial frame. Rather, we are dealing with one artwork unfolding as a performance installation in the white cube of the gallery space or the black box of the theatre.

Watching the durational performance installation *Laughing Hole*, by La Ribot (2006), we are forced to think.[129] Three female performers dressed in cleaner's overalls enter the space. The floor is covered with hundreds of cardboard placards, all face down. While continuously laughing they begin to tape the placards to the walls and continue this action throughout the six-hour performance. The cardboard placards contain phrases such as *Impotent Terror*, *Anonymous In Guantánamo*, *Detention War*, *This Is Disturbing*, and *Missing Spectator*. A sound artist records and replays the voices in an increasingly insistent chorus of laughter. The spectators sit around in the space, and can come and go as they please.

While the piece clearly reflects and comments on the political reality of 2006, one could ask whether it is research-based. The placards seem to be based on the author's subjective view on reality and not on objective facts. However, the aim does not seem to be objective but to deliver statements that the audience can respond to. The temporal openness of the work, the subjectivity and ironic distance of the signs, and the performers' loud laughter as one commenting gesture create a space for reflection. I want to argue that it is exactly by the gestural "shouting" of statements that a space for thinking opens up.

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128 Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Writing", lecture 22 March 2011, accessed 14 January 2019, http://danceworkbook.pcah.us/susan-foster/choreographies-of-writing.html.

129 A fifty-minute edited version of the six-hour performance can be viewed here: "La Ribot, *Laughing Hole*", accessed 14 January 2019, https://vimeo.com/76039001. Durational performance is a term for performances that does not have a clear timeline or plot but can go on for several hours.

The statements are not theoretical, philosophical, or scientific speech but taken from a supposedly personal catalogue of response to the world (*Help over Forty*) and at the same time echo statements from the actual political media (*Detention War*). Rancière's description of the emancipated spectator is illuminating in relation to this work, where the artwork invites the audience to create a narrative of their own and a response to the exclamations of the signs and the laughter of the performers. Like Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster, La Ribot sets up a framework in which the audience can develop a personal reflective response. This does not mean that it is a weak or neutral framework – the act of laughing is charged with meanings, connotations, and emotions – but it is the audience who must choose, interpret, and react to the statements. In *Laughing Hole* politics is mixed with the laughter and the physical embodiment of the performers, and the audience is continuously negotiating what this is about. The content of the signs may not make clear statements but they call for clear reflections from the audience. It is not possible to quantify how much research prevails in this performance. Perhaps the research is taking place in the performance space in between the audience, the performers, the sound, the movements, and the signs.

Research-based performance challenges the concept of the artwork and what can be used to produce more knowledge in the present society. As I argue, it creates different thinking, both in the artwork and in the reflection about the artwork. It offers a political voice not heard elsewhere. When watching *Laughing Hole* it seems as though we are being invited not to think. But this "refusal to think" is not a negation but rather a possibility of thinking differently. Thus, it is a space for thinking and not thinking, a space that does not produce knowledge according to scientific or academic modes of thinking. This *thinking in between* is exactly what characterises research-based aesthetics, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

We began this library of research-based performance with the performance lecture, which is a genre that shows its real or fictive research and points to a space for thinking. We end up with a durational performance installation, which substitutes objective facts for subjective statements and forces the spectator to think or to deliberately refuse to think. The library is not a historical overview but rather a theoretical division between different modes of enunciation.

Research-based performances are based on research and present

Figure 5, La Ribot, from *Laughing Hole*, 2006. Performance/ Installation. © La Ribot.

the research in ways that differ from academic, journalistic, or bureaucratic representations of truth. The desire for critical thinking is at the core of the work. Sometimes this means that the contours of the artistic genre are dissolved: we are *post*-dance (as we saw with the performance installation *Laughing Hole* or the performance exhibition *Expo Zéro*) and *post*-performance (as we saw with the knowledge exchange performance format *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*). At other times performances reenact traditional genres in order to point to the arbitrariness of representation (for instance, the musical, crime story, video, and book performance series *Life and Times*), or performances set up new genres and frames for experience (as with the documentary performance *Situation Rooms*, in which the audience is directed by iPad through a big scenography depicting different geographical and historical locations). I have looked at works that are based on research and expose it in the performance situation inviting the audience to think along. These works all have a question to answer, a problem to solve, something to find out. This

is not possible without the spectator. The spectator plays an active role. The work does not have one meaning cut out by the artist but depends on various readings made possible by the spectator. The temporal dimension of performance still frames the experience of the spectator in time and space, but it is more like a live, performative script open for interpretation and negotiation than a finished statement.

The short catalogue has served as a methodological mapping. An obvious objection is that all artworks offer thinking. This is difficult to argue with. The emancipated spectator does not need help to think. However, what I am aiming to do here is to point to a whole new way of research-based working. Research-based performance does not act as a pedagogue but enacts knowledge gathered and created in the artistic process, which the audience can choose to think with – or not. I could have chosen to focus on works that are framed "as research", but I wanted to show a broader spectrum of research-based performance.

Relating Research-Based Performance to My Own Practice

To conclude, I want to relate the concept of research-based performance briefly to my own practice, in which I have worked with several of the formats described above.[130] In the next chapter I will write about the performance lecture *Precarious Life*. I have previously explored the format of a performance installation in *Revolution Revolution* (2012), based on research about the Arab Spring (which began in Tunisia in December 2010), and the protest movement Occupy Wall Street (which began in New York in September 2011). I have also explored formats that I have not presented here. An example is the audio walk *Walk in Cairo* (2011), about the Egyptian Revolution in Cairo in 2011. The audio walk as a genre shares traits with the performance lecture because it often mixes "found facts" from reality, which the audience sees, with subjective, fictive, or sensuous elements. Further, it is similar to the audio guide that transmits knowledge in a muse-

130 www.sofievolquartzlebech.dk.

um.[131] Finally, I have tried to develop new formats such as the unfinished PowerPoint performance *Invisible Visible* (2013), in which I explore invisibility, visibility, and disappearance. I will end this chapter with some reflections on that.

Thoughts about Invisible Visible

> For the body, life is simple. It is born to a life in visibility.
> It might be more or less strong, the features might be more or less beautiful, the visual similarity to other bodies might be more or less clear.
> The body is always present in the here and now.
> [...]
> Last year I was going to work on a new performance.
> I decided to work on terror.
> I thought terror would be a relevant and politically engaging theme.
> I decided on the working title: *Piece on Terror*.
> I only had one problem: I didn't want to be seen on stage.
> [...]
> I begin collecting my notes from the work process in a PowerPoint presentation.
> I leave out most. I regain my belief in invisibility.
> Invisibility can be used as a resistance to power.
> Power cannot control a nothing; it cannot fight an invisible body.
>
> *Invisible Visible*[132]

Invisible Visible is an unfinished PowerPoint performance about how to become invisible on stage. It is the description of the process of making a performance. It is a bodily examination of invisibility never taking place. It is choreography without a body. It is a performance in the imagination. The "work" was made for *Samtalekøkkenet* (Con-

131 Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights* (1989) is an example of a performance that copies the format of a guided tour in order to perform an institutional critique. In the performance, Fraser leads a tour of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the guise of a fictional docent named Jane Castleton, who speaks not only about the artworks but also about the toilets and the exit signs, showing the power and arbitrariness of academic language. This performance served as institutional critique, an artistic practice, which began in the 1960s and became itself institutionalized over time. Fraser describes this process, arguing that the artists have become the institution, so the aim now is to create critical institutions, which are self-reflective. See Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique", *Artforum* XLIV:1 (2005), 278–83.

132 The script for *Invisible Visible* can be read as Appendix 1.

versation Kitchen), a platform for dialogue on performance art.[133] I projected the text as a PowerPoint presentation, with one or two sentences per slide. I thought of it not as a "performance" but rather as a written statement of the artistic work process. However, it has subsequently been shown several times in theatres and educational institutions.

In *Invisible Visible* the process becomes the work – if we can talk about this as a "work". The PowerPoint performance follows my working process of becoming invisible on stage. Through performative experiments and theoretical and subjective reflections I explore invisibility, visibility, and disappearance. I did all the experiments in the studio and created them on the basis of research about different ways of becoming invisible (ninjas, voodoo, and cloaks of invisibility developed within military technology), choreographic improvisations, and texts by philosopher Giorgio Agamben.[134] However, I do not show any of this on stage. The idea of presenting it through PowerPoint was to make the performer invisible while the story of a performance unfolds through language.

Is this PowerPoint performance a presentation of "my practice"? No. I don't normally do unfinished performances. Normally I finish them and present them as such. But somehow this "unfinished business" seems awkwardly fitting for research-based performance. *Invisible Visible* shows some of the process that happens behind the production and proposes how the work process can be seen as research. From this perspective I do not consider artistic research as the *after-reflection* of the artistic work. Rather, artistic research takes place in the work process as a consequence of using theory and applying different research strategies in the artistic practice.

In the next two chapters I will discuss research-based performance practice. First, in Chapter 2, I will examine my performance lecture *Precarious Life*.[135] Then, in Chapter 3, I will use the methodological mapping of research-based performance, my experiences of making a research-based performance, and a theoretical framework to conceptualise research-based aesthetics.

133 "Live Art, Samtalekøkkenet", accessed 14 January 2019, http://liveart.dk/da/samtalekokken/.

134 Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

135 Which is, in fact, a *Piece on Terror* described in *Invisible Visible* above.


SKRØBELIGE LIV
26.-28. maj på Medicinsk Museion billetten.dk
12.-13. juni på Det Frie Felts Festival i Dansehallerne teaterbilletter.dk
STATENS KUNSTFOND
MEDICINSK MUSEION

Precarious Life (Script)

The sick and the terrorist spend a lot of time waiting. Disease and terror teach you patience. Slowing down while the world around you speeds up.

There is the sick and there is the terrorist. And then there is the space. It is an operating theatre. Outside is the city. Beyond the garden. That's where the sick and the terrorist belong, outside, together with the other people. Here we are alone together.

In September 2001 I fainted so many times that I was admitted to a hospital in Paris, where I was studying at the time. A few days earlier the Twin Towers had collapsed after one of the most spectacular terrorists attacks ever seen. I didn't experience 9/11. I had collapsed in my bed and slept through the event. At the hospital they didn't know what was wrong with me. Later I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. Like all autoimmune diseases, it's chronic, which means I'll be on medication for the rest of my life.

Last year I read an interview with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who after 9/11 compared terrorism to an autoimmune process. Terror and autoimmune diseases cannot be defeated, because the threat comes from within. I'm interested in a double metaphor: how terrorism functions as an autoimmune disease, and how an autoimmune disease functions as terrorism in the body.

I. Terror

Symptoms

Autoimmunity means that the body creates antibodies that are directed against one of its own organs. "Auto" means self. Autoimmunity is a condition where the body believes that one of its organs is a foreign body, and therefore tries to destroy it.

An autoimmune process is that strange behaviour where a living being, in a quasi-suicidal fashion, works to destroy its own protection, to immunise itself *against* its own immunity.[136]

There are three moments in the suicidal autoimmunity of which 9/11 is a symptom.[137]

Figure 6, poster from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

136 Rephrased quotation from Derrida in Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 94.

137 The three phases are described by Derrida in Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 94–100.

1. First moment. The Cold War in the head

It is possible to see 9/11 as the last chapter of the Cold War. The people who planned and executed the attack were trained by the US to fight against the USSR during the war in Afghanistan. Among them was Osama Bin Laden.

2. Second moment. Worse than the Cold War

After 9/11 a trauma was created. The Cold War at least offered the possibility of a balance between two superpowers. But it's impossible to create a balance with terrorism, because the threat doesn't come from another nation.

We have created a picture archive of 9/11 that provides us with the calming feeling that the attack is over. It's over, because it's been archived, and anyone can visit the archive! It's all been recorded! It's all there on tape! We do everything we can to create a monument of these recordings, to reassure ourselves that the dead are dead; it won't happen again, because it has already taken place. We suppress the fear that the worst is yet to come.[138]

3. Third moment. The vicious cycle of repression

The Western world's reaction to 9/11 represents the most obvious suicide: by declaring war on terror, the Western world begins a war against itself.

Repression – whether it's through the police, the military, or the economy – always ends up reproducing the very thing it is seeking to disarm. Calling it 9/11 created an illusion that it was already over. Now we understand the perverse consequence of the autoimmune self. It is never over.

Is a vicious cycle controlled … or is it when you lose control?

Diagnosis

Autoimmune diseases are diagnosed with increasing frequency. The number of patients diagnosed with lupus has tripled in the US over the last forty years. The rate of sclerosis has increased by 3 per cent annually in the UK and Scandinavia. Type 1 diabetes has increased fivefold over the past forty years in Germany, Italy, and Greece. Some 24 million Americans have an autoimmune disease. It's an epidemic. Autoimmune diseases are incomprehensible and often invisible. Just like "good" terrorism. Only a few people die from autoimmune dis-

138 Rephrased quotation from Derrida in Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 189.

eases. They're rather like a slow condition, a constant fear of when it will go wrong.

What form of terror is like an autoimmune disease?
Suicide bombers in Iraq?
The PLO's struggle against Israel?
Assad at war with his own citizens?
Breivik?
Is it when a military dictatorship, like the one in Argentina, dumps the bodies of thirty thousand political opponents into the Atlantic Ocean?

The immune system is an army that fights invading enemies. There are tanks (macrophages), missiles (antibodies), lieutenants (T cells). The organisation of the immune system is like that of an army. However, there is no overall commander. Many equal lieutenants with no higher-ranking officers control the army. These lieutenants are trained in an academy (the thymus), where they learn how to distinguish between it's own citizens and foreign bodies.

Autoimmunity shouldn't be compared to terror acts committed by a small number of people intent on revolution. It should rather be compared to state terror – in other words, the executive power that commits atrocities, in the name of justice, against its own citizens based on suspicions of collaboration with the enemy.[139]

Do we understand terrorism better if we create an image of it?

Using disease as a metaphor for society is nothing new. The metaphor already begins when we perceive society as one large body, which is either well or sick. Which disasters have not been described as a spreading plague? Which wars have not been described as an incurable cancer? At the same time the language of the disease has also incorporated military vocabulary. We speak about the defence of the immune system, and don't think about the fact that in this choice of word is a notion of war, of offence and defence, of fighting, victory, or defeat. But how are we supposed to perceive the immune system, when the immune system no longer defends us against a foreign body, but instead fights against its own healthy cells?

What we are listening to now is the sound of the room and us.

Imagine that there is only this room and us. There is no entrance and no exit. We are the entire body of society. Each person playing

139 Interview with researcher in immunology Claus H. Nielsen conducted 17 October 2013.

a different part: you are the military, you are the police, you are the terrorist, you are the citizen – over here is the media – I'm the president. But it's like the game you used to play as a child: Murder in the Dark. You close your eyes, and when you open them again, nobody knows who the murderer is, and nobody even knows where to start looking. Because the killer might be the terrorist. Or maybe the military. Or perhaps the president.

Treatment

Can terror be treated?

Counter-terrorism in Denmark has focused on a broad-spectrum strategy since 2005. The parallels with medicine are clear: if we can just find the right medicine, we'll solve the problem. The keyword in counter-terrorism is *resilience*. It comes from biology, and means that you become resilient against external dangers and threats. The idea is to create a resilient society by making every citizen aware of the terror threat – everyone, be ready. Terror is no longer a matter of state responsibility, but rather the responsibility of each citizen. We all have to carry out the security policy.

The autoimmune metaphor is a strong metaphor that claims terrorism can't be defeated. In fact, terrorism is a notion that changes all the time. Terrorism is a politically motivated act with the purpose of creating fear. Our conception that terrorism is global, and that we are no longer safe anywhere – that is the fear we have to fight. Fear breeds fear. We become afraid of taking action and moving. When fear presides, it affects the entire economic system and how we deal with each other. So when the PET uses a medical metaphor such as "broad-spectrum strategy", it is a politically motivated choice.[140] It's more powerful than one would immediately think. No one really thinks about it.[141]

Do we refer to terrorism as a disease in order to create fear?

Side-Effects

Imagine that we are paying a visit to the grand body of society that has been hospitalised with an autoimmune terror disease. And the body of society says: "The attack itself wasn't so bad, but the side-effects are immense: we are at war now. And for each day we're at war, new terrorist cells appear, killing our own healthy cells. We are

140 Politiets Efterretningstjeneste would equal NSA, the US National Security Agency.

141 Interview with terror researcher Karen Lund Petersen, conducted 10 October 2013.

afraid, and we don't think it'll ever come to an end."

Now the American author Susan Sontag stops by the sick bed and says: "Illness is *not* a metaphor, and the most truthful way of regarding illness – and the healthiest way of being ill – is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking.[142] Terror is not a disease. You cannot fight a war against terror. Terror is a concept, not an object or a subject that can be shot down. Not a disease that can be cured."

We think about it for a moment. We wonder if the body of society will get well if we kill the metaphor. The understanding of the body follows the historical reality. Now disease, just like terror, comes from within. The world is inside us. The twentieth century was the century of the great world wars and of antibiotics. The twenty-first century is that of terrorism and autoimmunity. The enemy is no longer the Other. The Other is inside us. We can't defeat ourselves. We can only adjust the dose of medication.

I have a few questions to ask, before we continue.

Are you afraid of getting old?
Are you afraid of getting sick?
Are you afraid of dying?
Are you afraid of not loving?
Are you afraid of being put under surveillance?
Are you afraid of not being loved?
Are you afraid of a bomb exploding in the Metro?
Are you afraid of something bad happening to your family?
Are you afraid of the plane crashing, when you're on board?
Would you sacrifice your life to protect your loved ones?
Would you help one of your loved ones die, if that person was in pain?

142 Rephrased quotation from Sontag in Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978), 3.

II. Autoimmunity

Attack

I'll put on some music now. Studies show that music helps patients relax and let go of their pain.

That was Alicia Keys's "Falling". The track was number two in the charts in 2001.

In 2001, I was in Paris, where I was studying at Paris VII – Denis Diderot. Paris VII was one of the universities where the events of May 1968 took place. In September, I passed out so many times that I was admitted to hospital. A few days before the Twin Towers in New York collapsed after one of the most spectacular terrorist attacks ever witnessed. I didn't experience 9/11. I had collapsed in my bed and slept throughout the event. It takes one second to hit the ground when you faint. It takes ten seconds to hit the ground when you fall from the ninetieth floor. At the hospital they don't know what's wrong with me. They check everything and find nothing. The heart is functioning, and that is the most important thing.

Symptoms are invisible, but they can be felt. Symptoms make us feel alive. The body is calling us. We have not yet been sick. We don't know anything yet. Symptoms come and go – and come back with increased strength.

My heart beats very slowly.
I have no energy.
My muscles are weak.
I'm cold.
I'm depressed.
I can't focus.
I'm in pain.
I have a fever.
I'm bored.
I'm losing weight.
I'm so tired.

The fatigue. The fatigue is unbeatable. When I'm tired, I have to sleep. Especially in the afternoon, I can barely ride my bike home from work. Carry on, I think, until I reach my street, my house, open the front door, drag myself up the stairs, into my flat, fall into bed. Sometimes I remember setting the alarm clock to one hour later. After an hour I

wake up, turn it off, and carry on sleeping. The fatigue is unbeatable. Is sleep a desire to die? I don't think so. You wouldn't fall asleep if you were unsure of waking up again. If you thought you were going to die, adrenaline would be released in the body, and you would become completely awake.

> I love you. You love me. We're a happy family.
> With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you. Won't you say you love me too?
> I love you. You love me. We're best friends like friends should be.
> With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you.
> Won't you say you love me too?[143]

"I Love You", by Barney the Dinosaur, is one of the most frequently used songs for torture and interrogations in Guantánamo, the US military prison in Cuba. Sleep deprivation has the effect that your brain and body stop functioning normally. Your thoughts are slower, and your will is broken down.

Declaration of War

You you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you

Spring 2010. One night, I'm in my flat in Copenhagen. I can't sleep. I go to the bathroom. I'm sitting on the toilet and can feel sweat flowing from my pores. I know this feeling. I know what's coming. I wake up some time later on the bathroom floor. My stomach has emptied itself, and I'm lying in my own shit. I can't get up. I call 911. The ambulance comes. I'm placed in a stretcher. I'm being carried into the ambulance and driven through the city. It's nice. It's nice to be carried through the world. They carry me inside the hospital and put me in a wheelchair. I pass out again. And again. They clean me up. They scan my stomach. They observe my heart. They say I'm white as a ghost, and my pulse is almost gone.

I have a slow metabolism. I have an autoimmune disease called Hashimoto. Hello Hashimoto. The Japanese scientist Hakaru Hashimoto discovered the disease in 1912. We're dealing with a chronic inflammatory state with no bacteria in the thyroid gland while at the same time the body creates antibodies that destroy the thyroid gland.

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143 "I Love You" is a song from *Barney the Dinosaur*, an American children's television series. Lee Bernstein penned the song's lyrics, and the tune is based on "Yankee Doodle".

Hashimoto isn't very serious. But it's around for life. The feeling of being sick remains. I no longer have a normal body. And the diagnosis is not conclusive. An autoimmune disease never comes alone, they tell me at the hospital. It's just a matter of time. I've been admitted into the land of the sick. You can only enter here if you're sick or a doctor, and family members just get a day pass.

When you faint, the body lets go. You fall over and wake up again in your own sweat and shit. Some people believe that the only thing separating us from animals is that we're ashamed of our own shit. Some people believe that shit has liberating potential. From 1978 and up through the 1980s political prisoners from the IRA acted out what have been called "dirty protests" in Northern Irish prisons. They shat, pissed, and threw up in their cells and refused to wash. It was a rebellion. I fantasise that my body is just rebelling when it empties itself. The body's rebellion against the head.

The worst threat is the one that comes from within. My vulnerability is endless. Terrorism always has a certain "homeliness" to it. The most effective form of terrorism is the one that reminds us of an inner threat, that the enemy is always on the inside of the system it destroys and terrorises.[144]

There are three kinds of people: the ones who start a new life when they get a diagnosis, the ones who stop living, and the ones who pretend nothing has happened. I take my medicine, go for my check-ups. I quietly wait until I get a new diagnosis. Sometimes I dream about going back to the hospital. Then I imagine how it would be to lie in a clean, white bed, have food served and go to sleep. The clean, the clinical, the impersonal, life without responsibilities. I'm waiting.

You're walking.
And you don't always realise it, But you're always falling.
With each step you fall forward slightly.
And then catch yourself from falling.
Over and over, you're falling.
And then catching yourself from falling
And this is how you can be walking and falling
At the same time.[145]

144 Rephrased quotation from Derrida in Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 188.

145 Laurie Anderson, "Walking & Falling", from the album *Big Science* (1982).

Monitoring

Some days before the consultation, you have to have a blood test. We sit and wait. Just like now. Take a look around. We're all here for the same reason.

You should never come on a Monday (*it's Monday today*). On Mondays buses drive in from the suburbs full of people. Then there's an hour-long wait just to get your blood tested. We sit wondering what's wrong with the others. Most people stare into space. There's no entertainment. No magazines. No television. Sometimes the elevator door slides open, and for a moment we think that an angel will step out to pick us up, so the waiting is over.

A couple of days later you show up at the doctor's. It's always a new doctor.

How are you feeling?
I'm still very tired.
Well, your numbers are fine. How much medicine are you taking?
100 micrograms per day.
That sounds fine. It's always good to know how much medicine you're taking.
What about the tiredness?
Your numbers are fine.

I wonder if the body can get so used to being sick that it can no longer tell the difference between healthy and sick.

I'm admitted to the hospital again. I get a new diagnosis. The doctors say they are sorry. Disease should arrive later. Before death. But they will do anything to get me back to life again – not the same life, but a life that can be lived. They say: *We have found a new treatment. We will kill some of the cells in your body. There may be some side-effects, but, on the other hand, it's a more precise attack than treating you with immune regulatory medicine.*

That sounds like a bad idea. You can't just kill some cells in your body.

As you probably know, the US use drone killings of suspected Islamists as a means of fighting terrorism. Some claim that the drones are imprecise and show images of an Afghani grandmother, who's being blown to pieces before the eyes of her grandchildren. Others emphasise that the drones work with clinical precision and avoid side-effects, such as civilian losses.

Collateral Damage

The side-effects of the medication are the same as the symptoms of the disease. That's funny, isn't it? Symptoms and side-effects feel the same. The body feels the same. That's just too funny. Even I have to admit that. I do.

I talked to a young man in the waiting room. He said he had tried to commit suicide. He stood on the roof in order to jump. He didn't do it. Later he discovered that depression is a side-effect of his medication. The disease lasts forever, so the medication lasts forever, so now he is on anti-depressants as well.

Albert Camus writes that the only philosophical question worth considering is whether life is worth living or not, whether to commit suicide or not. All other questions come after this one.[146] Does the terrorist think about that?

The radical difference between us and terrorists is that the terrorists, while they have at their disposal weapons that are the system's own, possess a further lethal weapon: their own deaths. And according to our system of values they cheat. It is not playing fair to throw one's own death into the game. But this does not trouble them, and the new rules are not ours to determine.[147]

Is it a coincidence that you become sick? Does it become easier if you believe in fate? Fate is a good fiction. Religion is a good fiction. Disease and terror are also good fictions. Life put within a frame. If I knew I was going to die tomorrow, I would be desperate. If I decided to be a terrorist, maybe I could achieve something. Or destroy something. Destroying is also a way of achieving. To execute. To be executed by the disease. Hashimoto, I'm talking to you: I'm executing you, I'm normalising you, I'm naturalising you, so that you no longer can do anything. You can no longer seduce me with your otherness. I absorb you. I make you a part of me. I'm no longer afraid. Does that make me free? Are you free if you're not afraid of dying?

This Is Not The End

The sick and the terrorist are all alone. Disease and terror teach you loneliness.

What do you think about when you die? Imagine your own death. Where do you die? Are you alone or with someone? Are you together

146 Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. New York: Alred A. Knopf, 1955.

147 Rephrased quotation from in Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 20–23.

with other dying people? Where will you be buried? Will you be cremated or buried in a coffin? Will there be a funeral? Who will come to your funeral?

I have two scenarios. In the first scenario I'm in a sanatorium much like the one described in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. I've learned to wrap myself in a blanket, before I go out for my rest cure in the fresh mountain air. One day I die peacefully. I'm carried over to the chapel. My family arrives. I'm cremated. My family bring my ashes home and scatter them into Limfjorden.

In the second scenario, I'm a kamikaze pilot. "Kamikaze" means "divine wind". My name is Hashimoto. I'm one of the many voluntary suicide bombers. Captain Motoharu Okamura calls us a swarm of bees: "Bees die after they have stung." A ceremony is held before we embark on our final mission. We each receive a flag of the rising sun, a katana sword, and a glass of sake. We all put on a hachimaki headband and a senninbari belt with a thousand stitches, sewn by a thousand women, each sewing one stitch. We read our death poems aloud and take off. I fly above the southern part of Mount Kaimon, wave goodbye to my country, and throw flowers out of the airplane.

Voiceover

She gets up. She thinks about how other people spend their time. Why life has to be so long, and how awful it would be if it were shorter. She thinks that she can fight the disease by becoming a terrorist. If she becomes a freedom fighter, the disease becomes a fight for freedom. She can hijack a plane and demand free passage out of the land of the sick. She can take hostages, order champagne for everyone, and become the hero of the day. Her life will have a purpose. People will follow her. She will die, but she will die for a cause. She will travel to New York and stand on Liberty Plaza with a banner saying: I am rebelling against the disease. She will travel to North Korea, stand on the border with a megaphone, shouting: I challenge you! She will swim to the North Pole and let streams of blood draw a map in the water, and the press release will say: this is the blood that pays for your oil. The large body and the small body can no longer fight it. She is free.

The sick, and the terrorist. And then there is the space. It's an operating theatre. Outside lies the city. Behind the garden. That's where the sick and the terrorist belong, outside, together with the other people.

Figure 7, poster sketch from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

2.

Precarious Life as a Research-Based Performance

Precarious Life is a performance lecture about terrorism and autoimmune diseases. A common denominator for terrorism and autoimmune diseases is that they cannot be fought, because the threat comes from within. The agenda of *Precarious Life* is both personal and political. The personal aspect consists of exploring why the body suddenly starts fighting itself, as in cases of autoimmune diseases. The political aspect consists of investigating the autoimmunity of terrorism, and asks what we, as a society, can do when the threat comes from within. The opening of *Precarious Life* took place in the operating theatre of the Medical Museum in Copenhagen in May 2014.[148] Previously this space had been used as a medical auditorium. In this chapter I will refer to the script and manifested performance.[149]

As stated in the script, there is a personal motivation behind this project. In 2010 I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. For two years I asked no questions, never read up on the disease; I could not even remember its name. In 2012 I read that Jacques Derrida had compared terrorism to an autoimmune process. This combination of autoimmunity and terrorism provided me with a disconnected gaze through which I could regard the deficiency in my own body. Before a filter of reflection was applied, I was not able to relate to the disease; in this case it was a metaphor that enabled me to investigate the disease. In *Precarious Life* I am interested in using a double metaphor: how terrorism acts like an autoimmune disease, and how an autoimmune disease acts as terrorism in the body.

> It takes one second to hit the ground, when you faint. It takes ten seconds to hit the ground, when you fall from the ninetieth floor.
>
> *Precarious Life*

148 Subsequently, the performance has been given in different site-specific locations and in black box theatres. Each time, I have adapted the text and performance to the space.

149 Part of this chapter was published under the title "*Skrøbelige liv* som værk", *Peripeti* 25 (2016), 34–42.

There are two pressing questions. First, one may ask if the metaphor is able to open up new dimensions of knowledge. Second, one may ask whether it's ethically viable to juxtapose terrorism, often viewed as a societal disaster, with the individual's experience of illness. The ethical problem is highlighted because the disease case history is written and portrayed as a personal experience. In her writing about delegated performance, Claire Bishop has argued that ethics should not prevail over aesthetics. In delegated performances the ethical dilemma resides in the fragile relationship between the artist and the performers who are hired to perform.[150] While this is not the case in *Precarious Life*, I think Bishop's argument can be applied here too: the primary aim of the performance is not to be ethically inviolable but rather to illuminate the consequences of how we talk about terror and illness. The intention is not to suggest that autoimmune diseases are as "bad" as terrorist attacks, but rather to juxtapose the two concepts to create a framework that can be used to investigate how we deal with conditions that cannot be fought. Our comprehension of the subject and the body are in the process of changing. In the twentieth century the subject became destabilised. Now the destabilisation is complete. The Other is no longer outside of us. The Other is within ourselves. This is the core and the challenge of autoimmunity as a figure.[151]

Research-Based Performance – Challenging the Concept of the Artwork

Precarious Life is a research-based performance. The piece differs from other stage performance formats by activating numerous voices, levels of knowledge, and research strategies during the work process, and internally in the piece itself. How does a research-based approach challenge the traditional concept of the artwork? *Precarious Life* does not apply strategies to dissolve the concept of the artwork, as happens in a number of interactive and participatory performances. There is an artwork, and there is a sender. However, the combination of theoretical, artistic, and autobiographical strategies makes it difficult to decipher a clear sender position and clear intention.

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150 Claire Bishop, "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity", *October* 140 (2012), 91–112.

151 Microbiology is moving in a new direction. In the 1990s we were under the impression that we would understand humanity once the human genes codes were mapped: the DNA revolution. But 90 per cent of our DNA belongs to other small bacteria and others just visiting and in transit in the body. This unavoidably changes our understanding of the body and the subject on an individual and social level. However, it should be emphasized that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries offer examples of strong subject positions. In the twentieth century several dictators tried to exterminate the Other. In the twenty-first century the Other is kept at a distance by physical, mental, and structural/legal border barriers.

The piece is not interactive in the usual sense but depends largely on the *co-creation* and *co-reflections* of the audience. The ambition of research-based performance is to construct a space for thinking, where artist and audience can generate and test research together. And this is where the concept of the artwork begins to waver as a safe category. The autonomy of the piece is up for negotiation, because it is not a completely aesthetic enunciation but a multi-voice hybrid in between an art project and a theoretical reflection, which has to be activated by the audience on an aesthetic, sensual, and reflective level.

In what follows here I will investigate the artistic and research-based strategies in *Precarious Life*. It is a dissection of the levels of knowledge within the performance lecture as well as a study of autoimmunity and terrorism. The study should not be read as a *doubling up* of the artistic process, but rather as a slow unravelling of the conflict between art and research: does research-based performance generate knowledge, art, or both? My strategy in the performance lecture is to postulate a series of truths in order to create a space for thinking. At the same time, I challenge the authenticity we associate with knowledge: will the audience find me just as credible as a researcher? Does the audience believe in the autobiographical aspects, which serve to generate authenticity? What levels of knowledge are communicated to the audience?

Figure 8, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

Anatomy

In 1926 the author Virginia Woolf posed the question of why illness did not hold a larger position in literature:

> Considering how common illness is, how tremendous the spiritual change that it brings [...] what wastes and deserts of the soul a slight attack of influenza brings to view [...] it becomes strange indeed that illness has not taken its place with love and battle and jealousy among the prime themes in literature. Novels, one would have thought, would have been devoted to influenza, epic poems to typhoid, odes of pneumonia; lyrics to toothache. But no; [...] literature does its best to maintain that its concern is the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear.[152]

Actually disease has a good plot line: it begins with symptoms and ends with healing or death. What is common to autoimmune diseases and terrorism is that apparently neither has an ending. It is postponed indefinitely. *Precarious Life* consists of nine chapters that follow the dramaturgy of disease: *Symptoms*, *Diagnosis*, *Treatment*, *Side Effects*, and the dramaturgy of terror: *Attack*, *Declaration of War*, *Monitoring*, *Collateral Damage* and *This Is Not the End*. I start out by applying the headings of disease when speaking about terrorism, and subsequently talk about the disease using the headings of terror. It provides a contrast between the written and spoken language that permits the juxtaposition of terrorism and autoimmune diseases to stand as a constant antagonism throughout the performance. The titles were projected on the wall in the first versions of the performance. In a later version the titles had become physical signs that accumulated during the performance, and made it possible to continuously create new relationships between the different concepts.

As Woolf points out, illness has no significant place in literature.[153] When it comes to performance, this does not apply. Live art, body art, and conceptual choreography all position the body at the core, and

152 Virginia Woolf, *On Being Ill* (Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Publishing, 2014), 1.

153 Of course there are exceptions, in particular to be found in twentieth-century classics such as Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* (1924) (London: Vintage, 1996), which is also referred to in *Precarious Life*.

investigate the active body and the failing body alike.[154] The existential landscapes that unfold during an illness are surprisingly close to fiction, as is the case with terror.

> Is it coincidental that you become sick? Does it become easier, if you believe in fate? Fate is good fiction. Religion is good fiction. Disease and terror are also good fiction. Life put within a frame.
>
> *Precarious Life*

Jean Baudrillard describes in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2002) how the symbolic meaning of 9/11 as an event far exceeds the actual death toll.

> With the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, we might even be said to have before us the absolute event, the 'mother' of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place. […] The moral condemnation and the holy alliance against terrorism are on the same scale as the prodigious jubilation at seeing this global super power destroyed – better, at seeing it, in a sense, destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory.[155]

I quote Baudrillard in the performance, without mentioning that I am quoting him. Here the anatomy of the performance lecture is exposed: I quote without referring to the source, and I quote without agreeing with the quote but without embarking into critique. What remains is a statement for the recipient to relate to. I present it, pointing out as if to say: look at this, what do *you* think about it? The performance lecture is a way of exploring an area, but the format evades academic rules, and it is exactly within this release that the potential of the form unfolds.[156]

The performance lecture acts between a scientific lecture and an artwork, between objectivity and subjectivity. The format poses several questions: what is art, and what is science? Why are thinking and

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154 *Performance Research*'s issue *On Medicine* 19:4 (2014) contains a number of examples of connections between medicine and performance. Biopolitics plays an important part in international politics and is expressed in art. Examples are the performance artist Kira O'Reilly, who has collaborated with the Australian *bioart* project *SymbioticA*, or the choreographer Xavier le Roi, who uses his background as a researcher in molecular and cell biology in his artistic practise.

155 Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 3–5.

156 Other places in the performance I mention the references (Derrida and Sontag), providing the performance lecture a level of seriousness that usually is connected with academic lectures.

creativity separated? Which institutions can host which formats? The juxtaposition of research and art in the performance lecture shows us that representation is linked to the institutional frames. In order to accept that something is factual and scientific the institutional framework has to guarantee objectivity. Lighting, space, and architecture also have to mirror the norm of science.

Precarious Life is, however, more a performance based on research than it is a performance lecture. During the process the lecture elements were increasingly pushed in the background, while the performative elements were brought forward. Initially I chose the performance lecture format, because it makes it possible to combine a scientific and an artistic approach, but during the process I changed the form. At the beginning I tried to apply a number of lecture techniques, such as PowerPoint, documentary footage, and dissection. Additionally, I experimented with materials such as blood, excrement, soil, and smoke in order to present a physical image of the tangible and yet incomprehensible character of terror and autoimmune diseases. However, I removed these items because their indexicality contradicted the way the text enacted a space of possibilities: can you imagine this? Is there a connection between terror and autoimmunity? What does that mean in relation to our understanding of the body and the world? The material objects closed the openness of the examination and did not leave room for the audience to decide what to make of the metaphor.

Is it necessary to fulfil the genre codes for performance lectures in order to call a work a performance lecture? Not necessarily, but in this context it may make sense to apply a broader term such as "research-based performance", because it makes it possible to actualise different dimensions of knowledge. In *Precarious Life*, performance elements (set design, objects) and lecture elements were both eliminated during the process. What remained were the body and the text. The text flows non-hierarchically between personal memories of the progress of the illness, theory and reflections on the metaphor, and the existential and actual connections between terrorism and autoimmune diseases. The script has an associative structure where the word "suicide" in the disease case history leads us to a suicide bomber, or where the symptom of fatigue leads to a description of sleep deprivation torture.

In addition to applying chapters as a dramaturgical tool to guide the audience, *Precarious Life* also used sound as a fundamental ele-

ment. Composer Pelle Skovmand worked with microphones in the space where the performance took place. He picked up and amplified sounds and created a soundscape that sometimes sounded like music and at other times sounded like noise that interrupted my voice and generated an uncomfortable atmosphere in the space. By using sounds taken from the body, such as breathing and the pulse, we were able to reinforce the experience that everyone present formed a large, united body within the performance venue.

> What we are listening to now is the sound of the room and us. Imagine that there is only this room and us. There is no entrance and no exit. We are the entire body of society.
>
> *Precarious Life*

Derrida's Autoimmunity

A couple of weeks after 9/11, the philosopher Giovanna Borradori conducted an interview with Derrida on the significance of the terrorist attack and the challenges of international terrorism.[157] In this interview Derrida argues that 9/11 is a symptom of an autoimmune crisis.[158] Derrida suggests expanding the notion of autoimmunity from a biological phenomenon to a description of terrorism:

> since we are speaking here of terrorism and, thus, of terror, the most irreducible source of absolute terror, the one that, by definition, finds itself most defenceless before the worst threat would be the one that comes from "within," from this zone where the worst "outside" lives with or within "me." My vulnerability is thus, by definition and by structure, by situation, without limit. Whence the terror. Terror is always, or always becomes, at least in part, "interior." And terrorism always has something "domestic," if not national, about it. The worst, most effective "terrorism," even if it seems external and "international," is the one that installs or recalls an interior threat, *at home* – and recalls that the enemy is *also always* lodged on the inside of the system it violates and terrorizes.[159]

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157 Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*. The book contains separate interviews with Jürgen Habermas and Derrida about terrorism and 9/11.

158 Derrida's writing on democratic autoimmunity is developed in Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida, *Rogues*, and Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge". See also the Introduction.

159 Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 188.

The autoimmune character of terrorism appears in the dissolving of borders between friend and foe, inside and outside, local and global. Derrida argues that 9/11 was a traumatic event. The trauma causes fear, and thus the terror has been implemented. The autoimmune logic becomes evident when looking at the impact of 9/11, which is still unfolding in global politics. The date has become a historical monument that took the Western world into war (Iraq, Afghanistan), while opposition to the Western world and also the number of jihadists have increased.

Derrida proposes a critical reading of political theorist Carl Schmitt, who distinguishes classical war (a direct and declared confrontation between two enemy states) from civil wars and partisan wars, a distinction which on the one hand still serves a purpose but which on the other hand falls short when it comes to the violence of terror because it does not happen within the frames of war or with an identifiable enemy: "Bush speaks of 'war' but he is in fact incapable of identifying the enemy."[160] It has not been possible to prove that any state directly support terrorism, or that any state houses terrorists, because several of the known terrorists have called London, Madrid, and Hamburg home. For this reason conducting a war on terror becomes impossible, and the phrase "war on terror" is rendered pointless. Preserving democracy is the goal of combating terror. But the problem is that democracy often applies undemocratic methods in order to protect the said democracy. This means that democracy undermines itself from the inside by applying an autoimmune logic. Derrida draws attention to the fact that democracy and terror are not necessarily in opposition to each other but have a complicated relationship. The term "terror", for instance, was first used for the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution.

Figure 9, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

Figure 10, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

Terrorism

> The more we don't know what or who it is we fear *the more the world becomes fearsome*.
>
> **Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2014**[161]

Terror comes from the French *terreur* and from the Latin *terror*, meaning "great fear". In everyday language, the term "terror" is often used

160 Borradori et al., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 100.

161 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 69.


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interchangeable with the term "terrorism". However, "terror" is often used to describe the oppression of a regime, and violence against its political opposition. And "terrorism" is often used to describe the violent acts of extremist groups on randomly selected targets in asymmetric warfare.[162] Both terror and terrorism are used to induce fear. Derrida finds terror and terrorism to be connected within the same autoimmune logic. Thus the United States' indirect application of terror around the world has evoked terrorism against the US.[163]

In *Precarious Life* I use 9/11 as the distant, iconic event, which marks a crucial change in how we perceive terrorism. Karlheinz Stockhausen's statement that 9/11 can be seen as "the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos"[164] was arguably misunderstood by many, but it established the monstrosity of 9/11. The event has resulted in international warfare and national anti-terrorism legislation. In the performance I focus on how we are affected by these changes and how terrorism installs fear in society, on how we become afraid of acting, moving, and socialising. This fear affects the whole of society, not least the economic system.

The fear of terror has resulted in major changes at a societal level. As Sara Ahmed writes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, terror has produced *an affective politics of fear*: "It's no accident that in political rhetoric, freedom and fear are increasingly opposed."[165] These two side-effects – the reduction of freedom and the enlargement of fear – are what I revolve around in *Precarious Life*. The affective consequences are crucial with regard to terrorism and autoimmune disease alike. Half-way through the performance lecture, I ask the audience what they are afraid of. Some of the questions concern the fear of disease, and some of the questions concern the fear of terrorism. I have rarely experienced someone being afraid of terrorism. Of course, a performance is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative examination – and cannot be used as such – but I think the answers point to an interesting phenomenon: the fear of terrorism has not necessarily overpow-

162 Both here and in the script I shift between "terror" and "terrorism", since both terms are used in written and spoken language to describe terrorist acts in contemporary society.

163 It is worth noting that professor in immunology Claus H. Nielsen believes that the autoimmune metaphor cannot be applied to terrorists acts committed by a small number of people seeking to bring about a revolution. It should, rather, be used as an analogy for state terror: in other words, when the executive power commits atrocities, in the name of justice, against its own citizens, based on suspicions of collaboration with the enemy. See "Diagnosis" in script.

164 Terry Castle, "Stockhausen, Karlheinz. The Unsettling Question of the Sublime", Nymag.com, 27 August 2011, accessed January 14, 2019. http://nymag.com/news/9-11/10th-anniversary/karlheinz-stockhausen/.

165 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 70.

ered the individual. But at a societal level this fear has caused major changes, and this may in future affect the fear felt by the individual. We must continue to reflect on the affective politics of fear in order to describe how it extrapolates and regulates society.

Autoimmune Diseases

An autoimmune disease is a condition in which the immune system develops autoantibodies that attack the body's cells as if they were foreign invaders such as bacteria or viruses. In other words, the immune system attacks the body instead of protecting it. Although there are about eighty different autoimmune diseases, many of the early symptoms apply to many of them: fatigue, achy muscles, swelling and redness, slightly raised temperature, difficulty concentrating, numbness and tingling in the hands and feet, hair loss, and skin rashes. These symptoms are irritating but not life-threatening. A number of autoimmune diseases "only" require continuous medication. This applies to Hashimoto Thyroiditis, the disease discussed in *Precarious Life*.[166] In relation to autoimmune diseases, several important questions emerge: what does it mean to live with an illness and take medication every day? How does it affect the patient physically and mentally?

When I compare terrorism and autoimmune diseases, it is an attempt to establish a new way of thinking about the two phenomena.[167] In the performance lecture I mime the way politicians and doctors use metaphors to explain, or control, how we understand illness:

> It's an epidemic. Autoimmune diseases are incomprehensible and often invisible. Just like "good" terrorism. Only a few people die from autoimmune diseases. It's rather like a slow condition, a constant fear of when it will go wrong.
>
> *Precarious Life*

I pronounce the above diagnosis with an authoritative voice, which

166 I chose to use Hashimoto as an example because it is the disease that I have myself. Further, I found it important not to focus on one of the most serious autoimmune diseases since this would shift the focus from how we live with terrorism and illness to the dramatic condition of life-threatening diseases. Hashimoto is a chronic inflammatory state with no bacteria in the thyroid gland while at the same time the body creates antibodies that destroy the thyroid gland. Hashimoto is treated with daily use of the synthetic thyroid hormone levothyroxine. Treatment is usually lifelong, and the TSH level is checked every six or twelve months.

167 And then there is something else. The comparison seems obvious in the historical moment we are in right now. Illness appears to be the other big catastrophe, the other big fear. There is nothing like illness and terrorism that can make the politician act. The fear of epidemics and random terrorism renders secondary the idea that we might be facing bigger challenges, such as war, poverty, migration, and ecological disaster.

hides the fact that part of the argument does not hold. There is not an "epidemic" of autoimmune diseases. It is exactly this language of fear that has to be fought in order to gain a real understanding of autoimmune diseases. However, it is relevant to examine how fear sticks to terror and autoimmune diseases. In some autoimmune diseases, such as sclerosis and lupus, the patient does not know when an "attack" will happen. This brings us back to the *condition* as the common denominator of terror and autoimmune diseases. The condition of not knowing, of waiting, of being afraid.

Among the symptoms of autoimmune diseases are fatigue and depression, which, despite the increasing number of sufferers, are still not accepted in our contemporary high-efficiency society. In *The Burnout Society* philosopher Byung-Chul Han describes how the modern efficiency subject is in chains, just like Prometheus.[168] The subject exploits himself to an extent that leads to endless fatigue, which in turn is expressed in neurological disorders such as depression. Han identifies a positive potential to be found in fatigue as a character, a

Figure 11, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in DanseHallerne. © Søren Meisner.

168 Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Briefs, 2015).

disarmament of the self, which will free the subject. By extension, I want to argue that by dissolving preconceptions of the distinction between an inside and an outside, living with terror and autoimmune diseases will become easier, in terms of both the subject and the national state. By comparing terrorism to autoimmune diseases I want to point out that the twenty-first century does not follow an immunological structure with an external enemy. In order to live with terror and autoimmune diseases, we must apply the ability to reject fear as a content-producing tool.

Metaphor as Strategy

> Do we understand terrorism better if we create an image of it? Using disease as a metaphor for society is nothing new. The metaphor already begins when we perceive society as one large body, which is either well or sick. Which disasters have not been described as a spreading plague? Which wars have not been described as incurable cancer? At the same time the language of disease has also incorporated military vocabulary. We speak about the defence of the immune system, and we don't think about the fact that in this choice of word is a notion of war, of offence and defence, of fighting, victory, or defeat.[169]
>
> *Precarious Life*

Derrida compares terror to an autoimmune *process*. In *Precarious Life*, I compare terror to an autoimmune *disease*. Within this shift lies a significant difference. Spontaneously negative connotations occur once the *disease* becomes part of the metaphor. Describing terrorism as an autoimmune disease can potentially be detrimental to the way we understand terrorism, because it transfers the understanding of the thing itself into a valued perception of terrorism as a disease that cannot be combated.

Metaphors can be a tool to understand reality but can also act as obstacles to understanding. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which features of one object are transferred to another object in order to suggest a resemblance. In an artistic context metaphors are used to bend the frames through which we understand reality. The artwork's

169 In Danish the immune system is called "the immune defence". Thus, the original Danish text plays with the metaphorical dimension of the term. This metaphor can be criticised for manipulating the recipient because it connotes war. It is a metaphor that shapes the way we live and understand the world. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1980).

aim is to create new metaphors, to abandon validated knowledge in order to create new models of thinking, and to question misleading metaphors. In a scientific context metaphors are used to construct models. Sociologist Robert A. Nisbet has argued that what we call revolutions in thought happen when one foundation metaphor is replaced by another.[170] In *Precarious Life* this would relate to the twentieth-century metaphor of cancer and war being replaced by terror and autoimmune diseases in the twenty-first century.

> We wonder if the body of society will get well if we kill the metaphor. The understanding of the body follows the historic reality. Now, disease, just like terror, comes from within. The world is inside us. The twentieth century was the century of the great world wars and of antibiotics. The twenty-first century is that of terrorism and autoimmunity. The enemy is no longer the Other. The Other is inside us. We can't defeat ourselves. We can only adjust the dose of our medication.
>
> *Precarious Life*

The anthropologist Victor Turner demonstrates in *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* how metaphors affect our perception of the social world.[171] Turner argues that the "social world is a world in becoming, not a world in being".[172] Societies are not static. The human social scene changes constantly; it develops through actions, and actions cannot be static. However, he also points to the danger of using a concept like "becoming", because it is an organic metaphor that implies a narrative of organic growth and decay. But social existence does not necessarily have this character of development. Thus, the metaphor may be misleading; it *creates* a narrative, and potentially blocks other understandings of social existence.

Foundation metaphors are part of, *and remain in*, language, and become vital to our ways of perceiving the world.[173] As Nisbet argues, there is an inbuilt risk that these foundation metaphors become so convincing that they develop into a self-affirming myth, without any

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170 Nisbet, *Social Change and History*, 6.

171 Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors", in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 23–59.

172 Turner, "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors", 24.

173 Such foundation metaphors have been called "root metaphors", by Stephen C. Pepper, or "conceptual archetypes", by Max Black. See Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1942), and Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962).

connection to reality. This risk is embedded in the work with *Precarious Life*. The performance lecture opens a critical space in which the audience can think about the connection between terror and autoimmune diseases. The critical potential consists, first, in establishing the metaphor and in showing the autoimmune character of terrorism. At the same time it is important to highlight that terror and autoimmune diseases are *not* the same. There is a constant risk that the performance lecture can help reaffirm the metaphor, thus eliminating the critical potential.

Susan Sontag has criticised the use of metaphorical language surrounding disease in *Illness as Metaphor*, about cancer and tuberculosis, and later also in *Aids and Its Metaphors*.[174] In these books she demonstrates how diseases have been described with metaphors in order to make them understandable. Her point is that metaphorical thinking isolates the sick person in a distorted image of the disease. Overall I agree with Sontag: we do not acquire a better understanding of an autoimmune disease by describing it as terrorism, and it does not make living with the disease any easier. But the project within *Precarious Life* is to examine the metaphor and explore whether new insights and knowledge can be generated during the process. For this reason, I include Sontag's criticism but also reject it by stretching the metaphor to its limit.

Metaphors possess an implicit performative lie. We know perfectly well that terrorism is not an autoimmune disease, and that autoimmune diseases are not terrorism, but this dual image becomes interesting because it is able to illustrate how we perceive both disease and terrorism. In the *Treatment* section I refer to an interview I conducted with professor of political science Karen Lund Petersen, who has researched terrorism.[175] She explained how the counterterrorism policy in Denmark since 2005 has been to develop a "broad-spectrum strategy". In this choice of words, there are obvious associations to medicine: if only we can locate the right treatment, the problem will be solved. In the performance lecture, I aim to show how political discourse uses disease metaphors to clarify its strategy.

The opposite applies in the *Monitoring* section, where I describe how doctors use the vocabulary of war, such as "attack" and "kill some of your cells", in order to explain to the patient what has hap-

174 Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* and *Aids and Its Metaphors*.

175 Petersen researches Western security governance, participation, and responsibilisation of private companies and citizens in US and European homeland security, terrorism, and emergency management.

pened, and what is going to happen.[176] Terrorists use metaphors too. Indeed, 9/11 can be seen as a metaphor, where the fall of the Twin Towers illustrates the collapse of the entire Western economy, and a symbolic castration of the United States, while the bombing of the Pentagon becomes an image of military defeat. If we follow Derrida's description of terror as violence without an enemy, thus not a "war", we may argue that the concept of a "War on Terror" is indeed a metaphor, which George W. Bush strategically implemented in order to make it sound as if there was a visible enemy. Thus, the transformative potential of the metaphor also contains the possibility of using the metaphor as an instrument of power.

The Personal as Strategy

Using my own illness as a strategy allows the audience to identify with the material in a manner akin to Aristotle's classical dramaturgical structure and perception of the dramatic character.[177] There is a distance between stage and audience (audience: "this is not happening to me"), and at the same time the performer subject is fictionalised in way, which causes the audience to identify emotionally with the actions on stage (audience: "the performer represents herself as a sick person, but she is not sick now"). The personal element becomes enhanced by the fact that I am on stage. The sick body is thus physically present, while the terrorist body is absent. I have chosen not to delegate this task to someone else's body. *This is the sick body*, the gesture says. However, there is nothing immanently authentic about this body. It is true that the sick body is there, but the disease has also been fictionalised. No 1:1 relationship with reality exists. Thus, the fictional strategies are clear. For instance, I repeatedly use the phrase: "Imagine ...", and it is evident that in some sequences the tone is significantly more literary than documentary: there is no real excrement in this performance lecture. The performance walks a tightrope saying that we *do* encounter the sick body, but the sick body is viewed with a distant gaze, through which we can regard the concepts of terror and disease.

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176 Unlike the diseases that Sontag writes about, I have not been able to track metaphors for autoimmune diseases in everyday language. One reason is that there are so many different types and also different definitions. Thus, I argue that it is only specialists (doctors, researchers) who characterise the immune system using militaristic terms: "The immune system is an *army* that *fights* invading *enemies*" (*Diagnosis*). And it is first in the treatment of the disease that war metaphors appear: "We will *kill* some of the cells in your body. There may be some side-effects, but on the other hand, it's a more precise *attack* than treating you with immune regulatory medicine" (*Monitoring*).

177 Aristotle, *Poetics* (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 1997).

Figure 12, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Salone Dugentesco, Vercelli, Italy. © René Kruse.

Why is it important for the subject to hold such a strong position in *Precarious Life*, and would the performance be more powerful if the audience had more space to move, act, and think? To answer this question it is important to introduce the distinction between different subject positions within performance. The relationship between the sender and the performing subject is ambiguous, and becomes increasingly complicated as the lines between reference and fiction begin to blur.[178] This is partly due to the complex position of the performer as being herself and not herself all at once, a concept professor of performance studies Richard Schechner defined with the concepts "not me" and "not not me".[179] According to Schechner, the ritual deer

178 Arguably the boundaries between reference and fiction are increasingly blurred within contemporary art. Several artists work with documentary or archival material. There is more reality in art, but at the same time there is more fiction in reality. Facts are becoming fictive or, as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, there are no facts, only interpretations. This is by no means a return to Jean Baudrillard's *simulacra* or Guy Debord's *société du spectacle*, but closer to Peter Osborne's identification of fiction as a dominant tool in contemporary art. See Peter Osborne, "The Fiction of the Contemporary: Speculative Collectivity and Transnationality in The Atlas Group", in Armen Avanessian and Luke Skrebowski (eds.), *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011),101–23.

179 Richard Schechner, "Points of Contact between Anthropological and Theatrical Thought", in *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3–33.

Figure 13, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in Medical Museion. © Søren Meisner.

dancer is "not himself" but also "not not himself". The same applies to the performance artist who is "not not herself": she performs somebody else but does not cease to be herself. More "selves" coexist in an unresolved dialectical tension. The actor performing in classical drama differs from the performance artist exactly because she is "not herself". In *Precarious Life* I perform a fictionalised version of myself and I am myself on stage as performance artist ("not not me").

The performance lecture genre plays deliberately with subject positions. The lecturer subject is provided with authenticity because she behaves like a lecturer, but additionally it is crucial to the form that a subjective and often personal perspective is present. The subjective perspective establishes the performance lecture in reality – even though this reality – implicitly – is based not on facts but on a subjective perspective. *Precarious Life* is a first-person narrative despite the many voices that are permitted to speak. However, it is this "I position" that provides the performance lecture with its indexicality. But since both the performer and the audience realise that the "I" is fictional, or at least not a reliable subject, the opportunity arises for the audience to identify with the "I". The audience is given space precisely because the subjective narrative is so strong. The fiction of the performance lecture is perhaps the speculative element that makes it possible not to lose existing reality, but to propose an alternative reality.[180]

180 In an interview on speculative realism, Joseph Vogl defines a clear difference between speculation in philosophy and economy: "Whereas a 'speculative realism' runs the risk of speculatively losing its existing realities, financial speculation can take pride in speculatively gaining realities that never existed." Philipp Ekardt and Joseph Vogl, "In the Pull of Time: A Conversation between Joseph Vogl and Philipp Ekardt on Speculation", *Texte zur Kunst* 93 (2014), 108–25.

The Sick Body

Or just *the body*. The body as an example. In appearance, the body does not do much in *Precarious Life*. But that is only appearance. The body is a physical object in the space, with its singularity directing the attention to other bodies. Two bodily metaphors reappear in the performance. One consists of a repetition of Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of Vitruvian Man. In several sequences I stand with my arms stretched out to either side. This image is developed twice into a series of fierce arm swings that push the body off balance. These arm gestures of Icarus-like velocity were added as a visual metaphor for the continuous process of autoimmunity, which means it never stops, either as a disease or as a principle in terror.[181]

The other bodily metaphor consists of falling, and refers partly to the fall that occurs when fainting as a result of the disease, but also to the violent images of the bodies that fell from the Twin Towers. It is an unfair comparison, but the difference in the image is clear: the sick person rises again after fainting; the fallen body from the Twin Towers does not. There is a long history of falling within performance, not least because the uncontrolled, unplanned fall is impossible to achieve.[182] There is also a close connection between falling and failing, which turns the fall into an image of the performative work process, where failure can be as productive as getting things "right". There is no "right" fall. The fainting and the fall have loss and the recuperation of consciousness in common: the fallen is temporarily removed from the world, to return later.

> You're walking. And you don't always realize it but you're always falling. With each step you fall forward slightly. And then catch yourself from falling. Over and over, you're falling. And then catching yourself from falling. And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time.
>
> **Laurie Anderson**[183]

Anderson sings that we are constantly falling. We are falling every time we take a step, before the foot catches us. This image stands as an

181 The relationship between performance and referent is complex. The arm swings have had the unintended effect of leading some audience members to say that I look too physically strong to be sick. It should have been clear that this is one of the points in the autoimmune logic. Western democracy looks well trained, but it has an autoimmune structure.

182 See *Performance Research*'s issue *On Falling* 18:4 (2013).

183 Anderson, "Walking & Falling".

open gesture directed at the question of how to deal with conditions that cannot be fought: we walk, fall, catch ourselves, walk on.

I also copy gestures and expressions from various real people. In *Diagnosis*, I copy George W. Bush's speech in Congress declaring the war on terror.[184] In *Treatment*, I copy an interview from the 1970s with Palestinian hijacker Leila Khaled in which she is obviously flirting with the camera.[185] The framing of the interview and the fact that it was broadcast on American television suggest that it was considered romantic to be a hijacker thirty years before 9/11. Now, the question of who is a freedom fighter and who is a terrorist depends on perspective rather than historical chronology. Thus today's jihadists are called not only terrorists but also freedom fighters.[186] What struck me in the case of Khaled is that she appears as a freedom fighter in a public Western context, although she is the first female hijacker from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). I copied the *form* of an interview with a female terrorist, while the *content* was from another interview with a female terrorism researcher.[187] The aim was to create a contrapuntal performance style, where the flirtation contrasts with the serious content of combating terrorism.

Besides these very visible movements I do very little. I speak to the audience. There are only few moments where I drop the eye contact. Although the conversation form can be described more as a monologue than a dialogue, there is an intimate contact in which I deliberately use strategies, such as flirting. Gavin Butt convincingly argues how flirting with not being taken seriously has been a crucial element in his queer research.[188] Flirtation can be seen as an unserious strategy, where you are constantly ready to relinquish knowledge and security in order to reconsider structures. Must knowledge be serious to be taken seriously? In *Precarious Life*, I use flirting as an effect, with the purpose of creating a distance that makes it possible to take the

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184 "Bush Declares War on Terror", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CSPbzitPL8.

185 This interview is from the art documentary *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997), in which director Johan Grimonprez examines the history of hijacking using extensive archival footage. The film tells how the narrative of terrorism depends on context and accentuates how terrorism in the 1970s was often perceived as a struggle for freedom. For instance, Che Guevara appears as the freedom fighter par excellence in footage of the 1970s both in Cuba and in a Western context. See "Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.johangrimonprez.be/main/Film_DAIL_HISTORY_Synopsis.html.

186 Pamela Kleinot, "One Man's Freedom Fighter Is Another Man's Terrorist: A Selected Overview of the Psychoanalytic and Group Analytic Study of Terrorism", *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 31:3 (2017), 272–84.

187 Interview with Petersen.

188 Butt, "Scholarly Flirtations".

content seriously. Thus, flirting lies close to irony, but without the distance that irony has from gravity.

Multiple Voices as a Democratic Potential

At the end of her book *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler writes that the post 9/11 discourse of terror must include a platform for criticism that permits different voices to be heard.[189] In the performance lecture *Precarious Life* I try to create a space for critical reflection by making room for different voices, while questioning entrenched knowledge. However, the question is whether an actual democratic space is formed that truly permits the audience to juxtapose the different voices, and to add their own.

Political thinkers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* that, in order to exist, democracy must inevitably contain antagonism.[190] Conflicts and instability are necessary elements within the democratic public sphere. Bishop has effectively used this concept of democracy to demonstrate how antagonism makes relational artworks more powerful.[191] In *Precarious Life* I try to install antagonism by equating multiple voices that produce not only unambiguous facts but also fictions about reality. However, the performance is not a dialogue. I have selected and edited the speaking voices. If a democratic potential exists, it is because the different voices are reenacted, and don't merely provide a platform for free speech. Thus the aim is for the audience to form their own opinions about the issue, and to decide which voices and parts of the metaphor they agree with.

Research-Based Performance

Precarious Life is not a "finished performance". Rather, it is a performative testing of a research process. I want to suggest that the artistic work process can be seen as research if it examines a question or problem. From this perspective, artistic research is not only the after-reflection but also arises in the work process where the artist uses theory and different research strategies. Artistic research is not a dou-

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189 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), 151. The performance's English title bears the same name as Butler's book. This was not intended from the beginning. The Danish title, *Skrøbelige liv*, could also have been translated as, for instance, *Fragile Life* or *Fragile Lives*. However, when I had to translate the script, Butler's writing on war, violence, and mourning had influenced my work to such a degree that I found *Precarious Life* to be the right translation.

190 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

191 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October* 110 (2004), 51–79.

bling of the artistic process but an integral part of the work.

By using *Precarious Life* as an example I have been demonstrating how the application of theory and various research strategies in the artistic process leads to a different concept of the artwork. In *Precarious Life* I apply knowledge from medical research, philosophy, studies of terrorism, and politics, and in doing so strive to break down hierarchies of knowledge. Furthermore I try to obtain other sources of knowledge that arise from the physical, personal, and sensory.

It is evident that performance artists with a research-based practice use and generate knowledge. Thus it becomes relevant to ask who is able to use this knowledge: the artist or the audience? A critical voice might point out that the thought process remains the artist's own subjective experience, and that it is never transferred to, or established with, the audience. However, it is not possible to define the thinking process with certainty, so the criticism can therefore not be categorically confirmed or rejected. I think that research-based performance can generate new forms of knowledge by bridging research with artistic practice. Research-based performance creates a space for thinking, where the performer *and the audience subject* are able to examine knowledge, unquantifiable knowledge, the collapse of knowledge, and knowledge as an authority. The meeting of what we can define as objective and subjective practices within the performance situation opens up new insights into complex issues.

In this artistic research process one thing stands out: terrorism and autoimmune diseases continue. They are durational in their temporality and incomprehensible in their ontology. I will continue this work in *This is for her*, examining the temporality and ungraspable nature of torture and therapy. But first I will seek to formulate a research-based aesthetics building on my reflections in this and the previous chapter.

Figure 14, from *Precarious Life*, 2014. Performance lecture in DanseHallerne. © Søren Meisner.

3.

Research-Based Aesthetics

A Way of Working and Relating to the World

With the concept of research-based aesthetics I want to examine how artists use research to create and formulate their performance practice. Research-based aesthetics is about how a work establishes relations between different fields of knowledge and non-knowledge and how it produces new knowledge and repeats "old" knowledge.[192] I am influenced by theoretical thinking about knowledge flow and the breaking of boundaries between different fields of thinking. Key questions are: how can research-based aesthetics be seen as a way of working and relating to the world? How can we think about the interdisciplinary knowledge flow between different planes that takes place in research-based aesthetics? What is thinking in performance? How does the critical research-based artist work? Is there a method? And what new situations of knowledge can we imagine in the performance situation?

In what follows I will present and discuss theories that can be used to formulate a research-based aesthetics. I have chosen theories based on their ability to illuminate different corners of research-based aesthetics both at a concrete working level and at an abstract thinking level. The development of the conceptual framework is informed by my own artistic practice as well as the field of research-based art. The focus is performance, but much of the discussion reaches out to other research-based art forms. To conclude, I will use research-based aesthetics to draw the contours of research-based performance.

192 In many discussions on science and art the point of reference is natural science or exact science. It is important to note that my focus is not artworks that work with natural science, such as the bio art choreographies of François-Joseph Lapointe (accessed 14 January, 2019, https://bioart.sva.edu/guest/francois-joseph-lapointe/), but rather artworks that use research as a strategy or work method. For a discussion of the similarities and dissimilarities between natural science and art see Jean Marc Lévy-Leblond, *La science (n')e(s)t (pas) l'art: brèves rencontres* (Paris: Hermann, 2010).

Relational Aesthetics

Research-based aesthetics is a concept that seeks to identify a working mode visible in a number of artistic practices that use and make research at the same time. In this way it shares lines of thoughts with *Relational Aesthetics*, written by Nicolas Bourriaud, to describe artists working with social relations as their material. Relational art responds to a society with fewer and fewer social relations by creating relational situations in the artwork. Bourriaud describes relational art as:

> A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.[193]

Bourriaud argues that art provides spaces for social experiments and is protected from the conventions of human behaviour. Where art previously pointed towards a future world, relational art creates models of how we could live. Relational art proposes a social model, which can be translated to reality, and it can be understood as a reaction to a society where all social relations are minimised. This diagnosis may seem sentimental, but Bourriaud uses it to demonstrate how relational artworks create instant communities and escape the structures of a capitalist economy. The works no longer aim at formulating utopian or imaginary realities, but seek to build forms of existence or propose ways of acting within the existing reality. Relational aesthetics is a theory that can judge artworks "on the basis of the inter-human relations, which they represent, produce or prompt".[194]

According to Bourriaud, the exhibition space is the place where the social practice of relational art can best take place.[195] Television and books are private pursuits, and the theatre, with its division between stage and audience, does not provide the same opportunity to react immediately. With regard to performance, I will have to question this argument. As discussed in Chapter 1, a number of new performance formats have emerged, such as durational performance installation or knowledge exchange performance, which install temporary collective spaces where people can get closer to each other. Further, the division between stage and audience has been challenged since the

193 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 113.

194 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 112.

195 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 15–16.

theatre of Antonin Artaud or Brecht. One could argue that theatre is indeed relational because it sets up inter-subjective meetings in a temporal and spatial framework. What performance has is *time* – that is, if the audience does not leave. Performance unfolds in shared time and space, and this makes it possible to develop strong relations not only between spectator and artwork, spectator and performer, or spectator and spectator, but also between different modes of thinking. Performance creates a space for thinking together, for exposing the relationality of knowledge between different bodies, minds, and documents.

Bourriaud's theory can be criticised, and I will return to this below, but it is important to underline here that he captures what is at stake in many artworks of the 1990s and how relationality unfolds on different levels. His theory points to several traits of research-based performance – how relations of knowledge come into being in between work, performer, and audience – but it also evokes elements of a research-based aesthetics: how to think about research-based artworks. I pursue these links below. A key question is what the social or political potential of relationality is.

Bourriaud perceives relational art as a "social interstice", an illegal operation. He borrows the term from Karl Marx, who used it to describe trading communities that avoid capitalist economy: barter, selling at a loss, or autarkic forms of production. According to Bourriaud, the contemporary art exhibition does the same when it "encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us".[196] Relational art challenges the social system by bypassing the institutional structures in collective spaces of social exchange. The criticism of *Relational Aesthetics* has problematised the anti-capitalist gesture and the political dimension in relational art. For instance, art historian Hal Foster questions whether relational artworks develop collective spaces for political expression: "Sometimes politics are ascribed to such art on the basis of a shaky analogy between an open work and an inclusive society, as if a desultory form might evoke a democratic community, or a non-hierarchical installation predict an egalitarian world."[197] I agree with Foster: relational artworks are not necessarily democratic nor do they have an immediate impact on political or societal structures. Howev-

196 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16.

197 Hal Foster, "Arty Party" (author's original title: "Chat Rooms"), *London Review of Books* (4 December 2004), 21–2.

er, I think he overlooks the fact that Bourriaud describes relational artworks as "ways of living and models of action",[198] and I find it reasonable to argue that an artwork can work as model – even if it is a bad model.[199] Critic Stewart Martin proposes that *Relational Aesthetics* can be read both "as the manifesto for a new political art confronting the service economies of informational capitalism [and] as a naive mimesis or aestheticisation of novel forms of capitalist exploitation".[200] Martin captures an immanent contradiction in relational aesthetics trapped between the enactment of political anti-capitalist resistance and the act of making art that mimes and fits into the capitalist structures – a kind of self-betrayal.

Research-based aesthetics does not make the same anti-capitalist gesture as relational aesthetics. But research-based aesthetics is political in the way that it questions hierarchies of knowledge and the organisation of power that determines who possess the right knowledge and the right *to* knowledge. New artistic formats and new ways of working with theory and practice aim at escaping the demand for knowledge-productivity and find alternative ways of thinking. Bourriaud argues that relational art has a political project when it tries to problematise the social sphere, and I would argue that research-based art has a political project in questioning knowledge, knowledge production, and the institutions of knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge has become something super-specialised, which we do not always understand, and on the other hand, we are bombarded with useless information that colonises our everyday life. Situated in this paradox, the subject may need the time to focus, slow down, hesitate, and think. Artworks that question knowledge create a space where this is possible. Research-based aesthetics defines the thinking that the artwork produces or represents.

Relational art creates instant communities where the role of the viewer constantly alternates between being a passive consumer, witness, client, guest, co-producer, and protagonist. This alternation seems to be a condition for research-based performance too. What kinds of communities are created by research-based performance, and do these communities promote inclusion or exclusion? Artists use the institution while at the same time questioning it. They use research

198 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 13.

199 Research-based aesthetics has a similar problem when it proposes that artworks automatically create spaces for thinking without considering the individual experience of the spectator.

200 Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics", *Third Text*, 21:4 (2007), 369–86.

while at the same time problematising it. Research is carried out, but for what purpose and for whom? The role of the viewer is crucial for discussing the potential of research-based performance. A lecture, framed as a performance lecture, with a few personal remarks and a narrative structure, is not what I would call a research-based performance if it does not challenge the position of the spectator and the hierarchies of knowledge.

As described already, Bourriaud's concept of relational art and its political, social, and democratic potential has been criticised from different perspectives, among them that of Bishop, whose critique also points to fragile elements in my concept of research-based performance. In the article "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics",[201] she questions the democratic dimension of relational art, or rather the democratic potential of the artworks, that Bourriaud exposes. Bishop highlights two artistic practices: those of Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick. Tiravanija is best known for his installations, in which he cooks Pad Thai or vegetable curry for gallery-goers and thereby develops a relationship between audience and artist. Gillick is occupied with the production of social relationships in his interdisciplinary work, which comes out as sculpture, installation, graphic design, curating, art criticism, and novellas.[202] Bishop writes:

> all relations that permit 'dialogue' are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good. But what does 'democracy' really mean in this context? If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?[203]

She proposes to use Laclau and Mouffe's concept of antagonism to identify the traits of a fully functioning democracy.[204] Antagonism means that relations of conflict are sustained in a democracy. The frontiers of different viewpoints should not be erased but should be allowed to keep evolving. It is through discussion and possible conflict that democracy lives. While Bishop agrees that Bourriaud's examples create communities, she does not think that they contain any conflict

201 Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 65.

202 Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 55–8.

203 Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 65.

204 See Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Bishop builds on Rosalyn Deutsche, who – against a backdrop of Laclau and Mouffe – argues that democracy is founded on conflict, division, and instability. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 65.

or antagonism, which could lead to a real democratic project. The communities they install are simply too much based on conflict-free togetherness. The works by Tiravanija in which he cooks Thai food for the audience are good for networking among fellow art workers, but they do not create an antagonistic community where differences and conflicts could be exposed or debated. Bishop is not rejecting the idea of relational works, but she suggests looking at other works where antagonism and conflict are at risk, namely those of the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn and the Spanish artist Santiago Sierra:

> These artists set up 'relationships' that emphasize the role of dialogue and negotiation in their art, but do so without collapsing these relationships into the work's content. The relations produced by their performances and installations are marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging, because the work acknowledges the impossibility of a 'microtopia' and instead *sustains* a tension among viewers, participants and context.[205]

One of the examples she refers to is Sierra's *250 cm Line Tattooed on Six Paid People* (1999), in which the artist paid six people to have a line tattooed on their back.[206] This work is surely disturbing; it produces a sense of unease in the viewer, and it prompts a critical discussion that may not be equally present in the works discussed in *Relational Aesthetics*. Importantly, it is clearly not relational in the same way as the artworks Bourriaud writes about. In the work by Sierra we are observing the performing subject, not interacting with it, and I would argue that it feels more like a distanced relation than the antagonistic democratic space that Bishop is asking for.[207] The artwork displays a reflective critical approach to capitalist power structures, but where does the antagonistic *democratic* space take place, and where is the voice of the tattooed? We might argue that *250 cm Line Tattooed on Six Paid People* takes place in a space among art workers, curators, artists, and privileged museum guests: in fact, the same situation as the one Bishop critiqued in the case of relational art. The artwork does not create an antagonistic democratic space but rather a framework for the audience to confirm their political beliefs.

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205 Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 70.

206 Santiago Sierra, *250 cm Line Tattooed on Six Paid People*, Spacio Aglutinador, Havana, December 1999.

207 Further, we may question the ethics of the work – this, of course, is the point – but it is not the point for Bourriaud.

Both relational art and research-based performance propose alternative spaces and voices of being. I find Bishop's critique valuable because it questions the democratic potential of relational artworks: why are they made, and for whom? These questions are likewise important to ask in relation to research-based performance. In Chapter 2 we saw how Derrida conceives democracy as being in constant conflict with itself, trying to resolve its inner contradictions but not succeeding. Democracy is always "to come"; it carries the possibility of transformation in the "now", though democracy is never present but always deferred.[208] Although Derrida's thinking comprises democracy as a system of government, I want to relate it to the question of the democratic potential of research-based performance. In this case the performance situation is not about creating democracy, but rather about pointing to different conflicts and crises in the present society/reality and about questioning tensions, contradictions, and exchange systems in this society/reality. Turning to Bishop again, we can use the idea of antagonism to point to how research-based performance not only passes on knowledge but also meticulously questions the very foundation of the knowledge conveyed. Research-based performance creates relations between different practices, paradigms, and hierarchies in the art situation.[209]

I will seek to identify these interdisciplinary flows of knowledge and concepts by looking at moments of thought in the writing of Guattari, Deleuze, and Bal.

208 Derrida, *Rogues*. See also the Introduction.

209 Importantly, this also takes place within other art forms, but the main focus here is on research-based performance.

Log: 8 February 2015. Some Thoughts on Art as Resistance

On second thought: where is the resistance in research-based performance if the art market or art institution has already capitalised these art practices? Is it reasonable to demand that art is free of economic bonds or institutional dependency in order to be resistant or to create resistance? Bishop's way of using Sierra proves otherwise; it is exactly in relation to the institutional structures that the works become relevant. An example is the work *133 Persons Paid to Have their Hair Dyed Blond* (Venice Biennale 2001), in which illegal street vendors from Venice were asked to have their hair dyed blond in return for 120,000 lire. The fact that they continued as street vendors in Venice during the biennale made the work travel far beyond the art institution, even though it was clearly sponsored by it. Art does not have to be completely independent. It is fully possible to imagine art as being resistant within the institution and the already existing structures.

Historically, a number of artists carried out artistic research as resistance before the idea of artistic knowledge production became commodified. Beuys's statement that "teaching is my greatest work of art" articulates his belief that there is not a clear division between art, teaching, and life, and that teaching does not play a secondary role in his artistic practice. Here my focus is not on knowledge production or the artist as producer. I am interested in the unfinished business of thinking and how knowledge is continuously being made and unmade in the artistic process. I seek to make a concept that, like Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics, looks at how performance mimes certain traits of contemporary society while at the same time incorporating Bishop's demand for an internal conflict or resistance in the work of art. My aim is to create an operational concept that makes it possible to work self-reflectively in the field of research-based performance. (Strategic naivety?)

INTERDISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE FLOW

Interrelationality: Chaosmosis

In his last book, *Chaosmosis*, Guattari writes about the production of subjectivity. In the chapter "The New Aesthetic Paradigm", he argues that the fields of science, technology, philosophy, and art have their own forms of expression, but also that they can break out of these fields and move into other domains. The aesthetic paradigm is not limited to art, but art does hold a special place in the production of subjectivity:

> The aesthetic power of feeling, although equal in principle with the other powers of thinking philosophically, knowing scientifically, acting politically, seems on the verge of occupying a privileged position within the collective Assemblages of enunciation of our era.[210]

Art represents different models of subjectivity and has the capacity to create "unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being".[211] It is this capacity that gives art its privileged position. Simon O'Sullivan has pointed out that for Guattari, "art involves a simply finite assemblage that presents the infinite to us in a specifically different and singular manner in *contra* distinction to the more typical assemblages that surround us on a day-to-day basis".[212] This reading highlights the potential of art to create other modes of approaching the world – other modes of thinking.

Guattari identifies three assemblages, where the first exists in pre-capitalist society, the second in capitalist society, and the third in post-capitalist society. The third assemblage is not fully realised. It is a processual assemblage unfolding within the new aesthetic paradigm. If we follow Guattari's description of this paradigm, we see the contours of a society where the powers of thinking philosophically, knowing scientifically, acting politically, and feeling aesthetically interact. Is this utopia? Perhaps. In the present moment capitalist realism reigns, and it is difficult to imagine a post-capitalist society or a sudden paradigm shift.[213] However, Guattari makes no clear historical

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210 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 101.

211 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 106.

212 Simon O'Sullivan, "Guattari's Aesthetic Paradigm: From the Folding of the Finite/Infinite Relation to Schizoanalytic Metamodelisation", *Deleuze Studies* 4:2 (2010), 259.

213 See Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*.

divisions between the different assemblages, since they can coexist at different historical periods. This makes it possible to see moments of a new aesthetic paradigm unfolding within the existing structures of today.

The assemblage is a figure consisting of a number of exterior relations. It has a fluid character and is able to exchange elements with other assemblages. This applies to large networks of interacting elements but also takes place in the artwork.[214] I want to argue that the figure of the assemblage makes it possible to understand the inter-relationality of research-based artworks. The artwork is not organised by interior relations. Bits of knowledge and non-knowledge can flow freely between different assemblages and thereby provide the spectators with very different spaces for thinking. The assemblage provides a model to understand the relational dynamics in research-based art between different lines of thought, subjective, and objective knowledge, and different modes of understanding and sensing the artwork.[215]

The processual aesthetic paradigm co-operates with a scientific and ethical paradigm. It has ethical and political implications because "to speak of creation is to speak of the responsibility of the creative instance".[216] The breakdown of boundaries within the new aesthetic paradigm allows the existing values within different domains to be questioned:

> So the question of inter-monadic transversality is not simply of a speculative nature. It involves calling into question disciplinary boundaries, the solipsistic closure of Universes of value, prevalent today in a number of domains.[217]

We can use Guattari's questioning of "disciplinary boundaries" and "universes of value" to encircle and discuss the redistribution of

214 Guattari and Deleuze have written about the assemblage in earlier works such as *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Their description of the book as assemblage carves a model for understanding the concept: "In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds constitutes an assemblage." Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2002), 3–4.

215 For an analysis of how the assemblage can be used to describe the workings of relations in art see Solveig Gade, *Intervention & kunst, socialt og politisk engagement i samtidskunsten* (Copenhagen: Politisk Revy, 2010).

216 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 107.

217 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 117.

knowledge and value machines in research-based performance. Guattari's description of a new paradigm transcending the boundaries of art, science, technology, and philosophy captures the productive potentials arising from the relations between different fields of knowledge.

Bourriaud writes that "Guattari's concepts are ambivalent and supple, so much that they can be translated into many different systems".[218] I would argue that the openness and complexity of Guattari's theoretical framework are what makes his theory so good to use for developing ideas and thoughts in one's own artistic or theoretical practice. But at the same time this openness makes it possible to use the theory in so many different contexts that nearly any practice can be seen as relational.[219] The new aesthetic paradigm is a prism through which we can see the infinite relationality between different fields of enunciations in the art situation – but it is a prism that makes multiple readings possible. Therefore, I will now seek to get closer to an understanding of how the fields of art, philosophy, and science intersect in research-based art.

Conceptual Planes

In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari identify three planes of thinking: philosophy, science, and art. Philosophy is the practice of making concepts, which must not be confused with general or abstract ideas. Science makes functions, which are presented as propositions and which must not be confused with judgements. And art makes percepts and affects, which are not the same as perceptions or feelings. Deleuze and Guattari draw a distinction between the three fields, but at the same time they demonstrate the potential crossovers between them.

I will focus here mainly on the meeting between philosophy and art, less on science. Philosophy is the continuous creation of concepts. A concept is characterised by "the sum of its components",[220] and it

218 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 86.

219 Bojana Cvejić has argued that more concepts of philosophy are to be found in art (she mentions Deleuze as the artists' favourite) than there are artistic ideas to be found in philosophy and she asks "what has happened to the conceptual imagination of the artists today?" See "An Unfaithful Return to Poetics: <in four arguments>", (2015) accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.academia.edu/26017003/An_Unfaithful_Return_to_Poetics_in_four_arguments. I find Cvejić's critical observation to be an important voice for discussing how art chooses and uses philosophical concepts but this study promotes the idea that artists have conceptual imagination even though they use philosophical concepts or critical theory in their work.

220 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 15.

is a "matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting".[221] If we add a component to a concept, the concept will dissolve or change into something completely different.[222] A concept is better than an earlier one, if it points to new variations and responds to problems that have changed. Concepts can exist in art, but art does not *make* them as philosophy does: "Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts."[223] Philosophy is occupied with the constitution of immanence while art is about composition. However, the entities of art and philosophy can intermingle:

> The plane of composition of art and the plane of immanence of philosophy slip into each other to the degree that parts of one may be occupied by entities of the other. […] A thinker may therefore decisively modify what thinking means, draw up a new image of thought, and institute a new plane of immanence. But, instead of creating new concepts that occupy it, they populate it with other instances, with other poetic, novelistic, or even pictorial or musical entities.[224]

Here Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how art and philosophy can cross borders, how thinking takes place in art as well as in philosophy, but also how thinking in art materialises through other modes. They use examples of "writer-thinkers", such as Franz Kafka, Artaud, and Herman Melville, who do not make a synthesis between art and philosophy but branch thinking out into infinity. Deleuze and Guattari write that "[t]hese thinkers are 'half' philosophers but also much more than philosophers".[225] The artwork creates thinking – even more: it affects the way we think – not by creating concepts but by "thinking" through different artistic entities. Claire Colebrook has argued that Deleuze and Guattari perceive art as the place where we can see how our representations and thinking work.[226] Following this line of thought, I would argue that research-based performance, which uses concepts in the artistic enunciation, creates new modes of thinking through and beyond these concepts. Research-based performance gives room for thinking differently by cross-cutting the stag-

221 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 16.

222 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 31.

223 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 66.

224 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 66–7.

225 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 67.

226 Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (London: Continuum, 2010).

ing of concepts with the composition of artistic entities.

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how to distinguish between science, philosophy, and art. However, it is when the three fields overlap, and the differences between them nearly collapse, that the theory creates an interesting perspective on research-based performance. For instance, when naming the differences between philosophy and science, Deleuze and Guattari conclude that the two fields have different modes of enunciation but that they both work with thinking and creation, as does art:

> To be sure, there is as much experimentation in the form of thought experiment in philosophy as there is in science [...] But there is also as much creation in science as there is in philosophy or the arts. There is no creation without experiment.[227]

Science, philosophy, and art differ in what they make, but categories such as *creation*, *thinking*, and *experiment* are not limited to one of the fields but take place in them all. The three fields all work with an "*I do not know* that has become positive and creative, the condition of creation itself, and that consists in determining *by* what one does not know".[228] The important thing here is to point to the similarities between the different working modes, to show how all three fields work with an *I do not know*, how science is not just experiment, art is not just creation, and philosophy is not just thinking. Research-based performance consists of philosophical, scientific, and artistic lines of thought. However, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, art also does something else – and I would argue: research-based performance also does something else than other research-based forms of enunciation. It has a specific artistic mode of enunciation in which philosophical concepts and/or scientific functions take place.

What is the specificity of art? According to Deleuze and Guattari, the artwork is an entity that preserves. It is "a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects".[229] The bloc of sensations can be transported independently of the sensing body and this gives the work its inexhaustibility. The artwork is made with sensation and makes sensations. It is a "being of sensation and nothing else: it exists

227 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 127.

228 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 128.

229 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 164.

in itself".[230] One could argue that the ephemerality of performance makes it flee the materiality of other art forms, such as the novel, the film, the painting, or the sculpture, which are the main examples in *What Is Philosophy?* However, I find that Deleuze and Guattari do include ephemeral art forms when they write about the duration of the artwork's material: "Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration.*"[231] Thus, the bloc of sensations and the making of percepts and affects do take place in time-based performance.

The work of art is about *becoming*: "We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it."[232] This, I think, is expressed in art as when Ahab is becoming-whale in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* or when Mrs Dalloway is becoming-town in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.[233] Sensory becoming happens when something or someone is becoming-other. Deleuze and Guattari question whether philosophical concepts are not in fact defined by the same becoming. They argue that aesthetic figures and conceptual personae may pass into each other and that there are sensations of concepts and concepts of sensations, but they keep the division: "Conceptual becoming is heterogeneity grasped in an absolute form; sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression."[234]

Here it becomes clear how sensory becoming in the artwork can happen with the interference of conceptual personae. This can be used to understand the intersections between sensations and concepts in research-based performances. I would argue that research-based performance operates at its best when it contains instances of sensory becoming and sensations of concepts. This is when thinking takes place. If research-based art does not create affects, percepts, and sensations, it becomes something else (in the worst case, bad philosophy or bad science). Deleuze and Guattari observe that both abstract art and conceptual art are attempts to bring philosophy and art together, but that they still create sensations and not concepts. The same can be said of research-based performance. It is defined by its aesthetic

230 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 164.

231 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 166.

232 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 169.

233 Ahab is the name of the captain in *Moby Dick* (1851). Mrs Dalloway is the name of the main character in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).

234 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 177. The sunflower is a reference to Vincent Van Gogh's painting.

composition. It is sensations, percepts, and affects – but it is also conceptual thinking and lines of thought.

The research-based performance is a network of interfering voices. Interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari write that a network can be established between the planes of science, philosophy, and art, and that the network is most powerful where the planes interlace, that is "where sensation becomes sensation of concept or function, where the concept becomes concept of function or of sensation, and where the function becomes function of sensation or concept".[235] This description captures the cross-cutting of different modes of thinking and being in research-based performance, where one field can exceed itself and interlace with other fields.

Is it too rigid to keep the planes of science, art, and philosophy as distinct categories if we fully engage in the crossover of these three planes in research-based performance and artistic research? Within these working modes thinking and artistic practice interlace and cannot be separated. I want to propose that we are entering, or are already situated in, an artistic and learning landscape where it is becoming blurred when one plane begins and another ends, when we are dealing with sensations and when we are dealing with concepts, and where we may ask if art in fact will be able to make concepts and functions while philosophy and science will be able to make percepts, affects, and sensations? These are open questions that cannot be answered at this moment. Nonetheless, I will end this section by pointing to some examples of the intersection between, philosophy, science, and art.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy and science both deal with problems, but where science intends to solve problems with propositions, philosophy engages in a dialectic discussion.[236] Art is not mentioned here, but as pointed out in the library of research-based performances, these works all propose a question to answer or a problem to solve – even if the intention is not to *solve* the problem or to *answer* the question.[237] Where conflict used to be the dramaturgi-

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235 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 199.

236 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 79.

237 Deleuze and Guattari write that philosophy "does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like 'Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure'." Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 82. Much the same can be said about research-based performance, which differs from science because the intention is not to give answers or solutions but rather to propose other ways of thinking. Interestingly, Peter Osborne has argued that the concept of beauty has been replaced by the concept of "is it interesting?" when talking about art. Lecture at the conference *F(r)ictions of Art*, Freie Universität, 26 June 2015.

cal turning point in performing arts, a question or a problem is the dramaturgical motor in research-based performance. If we turn to an educational context, there is a growing focus on artistic research. Students in performing arts schools now often have to begin an artistic process with a "research question". If we look at an artistic practice such as the German performance duo Quast & Knoblich, they claim to work with "theatrical problems", from which they develop situations and site-specific happenings and actions.[238]

Research-based artists work more and more with problems and questions. Referring back to Deleuze and Guattari, we could argue that research-based performance responds to problems with percepts, affects, and sensations, and that the intention is not to fulfil the laws of philosophy or science but to display questions and problems that are not solved elsewhere. But we could also ask whether research-based art will be able to work with problems and questions by engaging propositions, concepts, percepts, and sensations?[239] In order to concretise the transfer of thoughts between different fields, I will now turn to Mieke Bal's travelling concepts.

Can Concepts Travel?

Can concepts travel between different planes of enunciation? Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities – A Rough Guide* is, as the title implies, a guide to understanding how concepts travel between disciplines and how they change during this journey. Interdisciplinarity in the humanities is based on the sharing and travelling of concepts. One of her examples is the concept of "focalisation", which has travelled from the visual domain to narratology and back to visual analysis, developing during the journey: "The itinerary is to be termed *inter*-disciplinary [...] a negotiation, a transformation, a reassessment is needed at each stage."[240]

I will argue that the same happens in research-based art that uses concepts from other fields. The concepts are not necessarily invented in the art situation, but they are changed along the way, which means that *they are constantly being made*. When I take over Derrida's concept of autoimmune terror in my artistic practice (*Precarious Life*) and later write about it in my theoretical practice, it is an example of

238 See "Quast & Knoblich", accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.quastknoblich.de.

239 I might be stretching the argument of Deleuze and Guattari. However, it seems to be in their spirit to use their argument in new ways.

240 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 39.

how the traffic between art and research transforms concepts within both artistic and theoretical practice. As Bal points out, the itinerary is interdisciplinary since the value of the concept is being negotiated, transformed, and reassessed along the way. Derrida's concept is in itself an example of a journey from biology to philosophy and political thinking. When Mobile Academy makes a *Blackmarket* about the Anthropocene,[241] the concept of the Anthropocene changes during the event, not in a universal manner but for the people involved. The travelling of concepts is connected to communities of shared knowledge. Derrida's concept of autoimmune terror comes into existence when you read the book or watch a performance in which it is used. In this way the travelling of concepts between art and research is rooted in time and space, but the after-effects of this itinerary are not bound in time and space since the concept may continue its journey.[242]

According to Bal, concepts are created. They are not fixed entities but can change constantly.[243] Concepts are never simply descriptive. They are programmatic and normative, they can foster an understanding of a complex problem, they can enable a discussion, and they can create common ground between different disciplines.[244] Concepts can focus interest, and a good concept can found a scientific discipline or field.[245] Concepts play an important role within science: "Concepts are legitimate as long as they avoid the status of 'mere metaphor' or ideology and as long as they follow the rules of scientificity."[246] Sciences are taken seriously because they are recognised as scientific within the social-cultural field of scientific practice. This description, although simple, clarifies why research-based performance may not be taken seriously as research: it simply does not obey the rules of scientific procedure. Is research-based art trying to legitimise its status as research by transferring concepts from the "serious" domain of

241 Mobile Academy, *On Becoming Earthlings: 150 Dialogues and Exercises in Shrinking and Expanding the Human*, Paris, 21 November 2015.

242 The Lebanese philosopher Jalal Toufic's concept of "untimely collaboration" suggests that people can collaborate, or rather affect each other, across time and space. See Jalal Toufic, *Distracted* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1992). In this perspective my appropriation of Derrida's concept is bound to affect his concept even though he was writing about it more than ten years before I made my performance lecture and even if just a few people see my performance lecture.

243 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 51.

244 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 23–8.

245 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 31–3.

246 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, 29–30.

science?[247] Derrida creates a concept when he transfers the term "autoimmunity" from biology to philosophy. I transfer Derrida's concept of terror as an autoimmune figure to a performance, and I use it to examine the terror of autoimmunity and the autoimmunity of terror. The use of the concept in the performance allows an aesthetic figure to intersect with a philosophical concept as described by Deleuze and Guattari. And it is in this sliding in and out between concept and sensations that we find some of the specificity of the travel between research and art and a possible gateway to other world-making.

Travelling Concepts elicits an understanding of the interdisciplinary knowledge flows that arise when research and practice meet in the performance situation. Some concepts may improve as a result of their travelling between research and art. In this travel, different artistic and subjective trajectories disturb or strengthen the operating dimension of the concept. As is the case with the travelling of concepts in the humanities, there is no guarantee that the journey will be enriching. It might also trivialise the power of the concept. There is a potential in transgressing the borders between philosophy, science, and art, but there are also risks: when research-based performance becomes didactic or the desire for entertainment surpasses the desire for thinking, then the tension between artistic, philosophical, and scientific strategies is weakened and the performance may stop to create thinking. Irit Rogoff's terminology can help illuminate the complex working in and between practice and theory. The question is how to actually work, how to be a critical artist-thinker.

247 The academic institution invites artists to develop new modes of enunciation while at the same time sustaining limited criteria for what valuable knowledge is. At a seminar on artistic research, artist and professor Angela Melitopoulos has argued that "overall perspectives" are connected to military power, and this is exactly why her artistic research does not have an overall perspective but instead seeks to de-colonise thought. While I support this point of view, I am aware that most artistic researchers have to take an overall perspective in their research for it to be accepted. Artists talk at the Danish National School of Performing Arts, 21 November 2014.

THE CRITICAL ARTIST-THINKER

Critique, Criticism, Criticality

> The old boundaries between making and theorizing, historicizing and displaying, criticizing and affirming have long been eroded. Artistic practice is being acknowledged as the production of knowledge and theoretical and curatorial endeavors have taken on a far more experimental and inventive dimension, both existing in the realm of potentiality and possibility rather than that of exclusively material production.[248]

In her theoretical and curatorial practice Rogoff has pointed to the disruption of dichotomies between theory and practice. "What is a theorist?", she asks and answers: "A theorist is one that has been undone by theory."[249] The job of the theorist is not about accumulating knowledge but about taking a position where one is always ready to give up knowledge and security in order to rethink structures. The theorist occupies a field of possibilities facilitating different potentials.

A key concept in Rogoff's terminology is *criticality*, an embodied position that the theorist occupies now. She describes how, within a short period, we have moved from criticism to critique to criticality. *Criticism* is characterised by the discipline of applying values and judgement on the analysed object. *Critique* is linked to deconstruction and post-structuralism and makes it possible to critically examine the naturalised values and truth claims of knowledge. Critique has been very important in the uncovering of existing cultural injustices. The problem with critique is that it stays on the outside – at a distance – in order to expose the hidden structures. With criticality on the other hand one is *inside* the process, acting in the present situation, searching for new understandings of reality:

> Criticality […] is precisely in the operations of recognizing the limitations of one's thought, for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure. […] Criticality is therefore connected, in my mind, with risk, with a cultural inhabi-

248 Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", 97.

249 Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", 97.

> tation that acknowledges what it is risking without yet fully being able to articulate it.[250]

An embodied criticality means that we are embedded in the material we are working with, building on critique but working from an uncertain ground where the aim is not to perform critical analysis but to inhabit the culture that we are examining. Criticality is about giving up already tried structures, unlearning something old in order to think in a new way.

The concept of "criticality" can be used as a theoretical tool to discuss how to work in a research-based way and how to be an artist-thinker with a research-based practice. Research-based aesthetics is exactly about giving up, moving away, or being without secure knowledge or accepted values and truth claims. In research-based aesthetics there is no possibility of staying on the outside. One is inevitably always on the inside of the process, trying out, testing, thinking. The research-based artist may use critique in this process, as I, for instance, used Derrida's critique of autoimmunity and terror to think about the two concepts. But the thinking is always situated *within* the process. It is a performative mode where meaning takes place here and now while the process is unfolding. Meaning is neither situated in a following moment of after-reflection nor is it immanent – *always already there* – waiting to be exposed. In research-based performance the thinking takes place within the artwork. Research-based performance does not repeat already existing knowledge; it changes it.[251]

It is important to underline that Rogoff describes a movement from "theory-informed practice" to "practice-driven theory". The focus is on the *practice of theory*. We might look at her concept of "smuggling" as a concrete example of embodied criticality.[252] Smuggling is

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250 Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", 99–100.

251 Likewise, artistic research unfolds embedded criticality. This can be challenging because of the demand for critical distance, but, as Rogoff argues, critique can be performed within an embedded criticality.

252 Rogoff, "Smuggling". *Smuggling* is a collaborative project with the theorist Simon Harvey and the video artist Ergin Cavusoglu. The three collaborators ambitiously understand their work as vehicles for the production of new subjects in the world. See Simon Harvey, "Smuggling – In Theory and in Practice", PhD dissertation, University of London, 2004. Interestingly, the theorist Mika Hannula has also used the concept of smuggling to describe the intersection between art and research in artistic research, but with negative connotations, in contrast to Rogoff. In fact, he uses three operative metaphors for artistic research: 1) "Like Trying to Run in Waist-High New Snow" (it is hard work); 2) "Crossing a River by Feeling Each Stone" (it is a slow process); and 3) "Moving like Smugglers' Boats, moving quietly in the night, with no lights, almost colliding with one another, but never quite making contact." Hannula describes the metaphor of smuggling as a warning example, albeit with some hope for the future. Mika Hannula, "Catch Me If You Can: Chances and Challenges of Artistic Research", *Art and Research. A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 2:2 (2009), 1–2.

an attempt to find a practice, which combines the pairings art and politics, theory and practice, or analysis and action, in an embodied criticality. As mentioned above, criticality is not about finding solutions but about inhabiting a problem. Rogoff introduces the concept of smuggling to see whether, with all its illegal connotations, it can be an active, political mode of inhabiting the world.

Smuggling operates regardless of boundaries. With a reference to Derrida, Rogoff states that boundaries do nothing more than establish the limits of the possible. She is trying to formulate what an unbounded practice or unbounded knowledge might be. If we think about it, this is hard to imagine. Knowledge and practice seem always to be bounded by something, and we use distinctions and differences to develop our thinking. However, I would argue, that in every research-based practice there is an attempt to surpass the limits of the possible and imagine – fictitiously or not – an unbounded space for thinking. ("I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams." *Hamlet*, Act II, scene ii.)

Smuggling as a concept and method is characterised by being a form of surreptitious transfer with no visible and available protocols to follow. It operates "as a principle of movement, of fluidity and of dissemination that disregards boundaries". And importantly: "The line of smuggling does not work to retrace the old lines of existing divisions – but glides along them. A performative disruption that does not produce itself as conflict."[253] Here we may stop for a moment and ask how "disruption without a conflict" relates to the necessary antagonism in democracy discussed earlier. I think we can understand Rogoff's concept of "smuggling" as a way to instigate non-visible (in the night) disruptions *within* the system or, in other words, as a way to exist illegally in between existing economic, political, and educational structures. This clandestine behaviour may be questioned at a political level (because antagonism means that democracy lives through visible conflicts, which is not the same as illegal activities), but it may be useful for thinking about an artistic (or curatorial, in the case of Rogoff) practice. As we saw earlier, Bourriaud borrows Marx's term "interstice" to describe how relational art creates free spaces and temporalities that escape the structures of everyday capitalist society. In much the same way smuggling represents something illegal in the dominant society and economy, but without being in direct conflict

253 Rogoff, "Smuggling", 4.

with it or criticising it directly. In this way it produces resistance without being marginalised from the system.

Seen as a practice, smuggling operates on its own without conforming to the dominant operating system. And it is exactly in this manner that we can see it at work in research-based performance: knowledge, methods, politics, and theories are being smuggled from one field to another without following visible rules. If we bend Rogoff's argument slightly, we may say that one cannot produce thinking through one protocol. To think with a clandestine concept such as smuggling means that it is not necessary to operate in the already existing modes of critique. The subject can inhabit an embodied criticality in the darkness operating between what is possible and what is not.

Rogoff has argued that artistic research has political impact through the movement of different platforms. As I understand her writing, the work of the artist is to access knowledge in another way, through other methods, and to "queer" it so that it escapes the endless repetition of the same knowledge. This "queering" of knowledge seems to me to be a point of departure for research-based aesthetics and performance. To point out different strategies of queering knowledge, I will look at Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of "weak theories". But first, a thought on "touch".

Log: December 2015

Everybody felt it was a great discussion. Not to critique the text. Not to tear and trash the theoretical argument and the methodological approach. Not to want to be critical. Not to move. Not to leave point zero. Not to demonstrate qualifications to perform critical theory. Not to step out. Not to look in a new direction. Rogoff does not reject critical thinking. On the contrary, she argues that we should keep our critical approach but perform it from a stance of embodied criticality. The discussion was a classical example of critique, of pointing to the weaknesses of a text, of laying bare the internal conflict of an argument, but without proposing any alternative.

Touching time.[254] Touching space. Touching thought. Touch is about a sensibility to objects, practices, bodies, and minds. Touch is about the transfer of knowledge between different fields, from an object, from a text, from another person. Touch goes beyond the normal modes of academia because it is sensible and sensuous at the same time. Touch is performative. When we touch a material or an immaterial object, it does something to us and we do something back. You can be touched by something that has not even touched you. Touch happens both when you touch a texture and when you are touched by something. You are emotionally affected or moved by something. To be touched moves you. Touching is present in artistic practice – or in all our practice. We are situated right in the middle of practice – there is no inside or outside – we are right in the middle of matter and sensation. But perhaps not of meaning. What are we to do with meaning anyway?

254 This log also refers to Karen Barad's text "On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am", *differences* 23:3 (2012), 206–23.

Weak Theories

There is a strong connection between affect and touch, which is clear in *Touching Feeling*, by Sedgwick. In the book she aims to provide us with tools and techniques for non-dualistic thought.[255] In the essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" she confronts what she calls the "paranoia" of critical theory. Critical theory is paranoid because it seeks to uncover a hidden truth about the structures that organise our reality. Like Rogoff, Sedgwick does not reject critical theory, but she questions whether paranoid practices are the only methodological possibility: "They represent *a* way among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organising knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly."[256] This critique of paranoia appears illuminating in relation to research-based aesthetics because it captures the difficulties – but also the potential – of staging research in new ways. Paranoid critical thinking is so fundamental to our cultural understanding that it is hard to challenge traditional modes of representing research.

She identifies five aspects of paranoid practice. These are useful for proposing how research-based performance can seek to circumvent the reproduction of paranoia and the production of existing critical practices:

1. Paranoia is *anticipatory* because the theorist is always already anticipating a certain outcome. This makes for a "complex relation to temporality",[257] because there has been no prior moment that did not already bear the bad news and no future moment that does not already have the bad news inscribed. Research-based performance does not anticipate a certain outcome but seeks to sustain the processual intermingling of different planes of thought.

2. Paranoia is *reflexive* and *mimetic*. Sedgwick argues that paranoia requires "being imitated to be understood, and it, in turn, seems to understand only by imitation".[258] This means that the analysis and the method used for analysis support each other to the extent that they rule out "alternative ways of understanding or things to understand".[259] It is a challenge not to be reflexive and mimetic in order to

255 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 1.

256 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 130.

257 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 130.

258 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 131.

259 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 131.

be understood and to understand, but research-based performance seeks constantly to discover "alternative ways of understanding".

3. Paranoia is *a strong theory*, which means that it seeks to explain everything in a single gesture.[260] Marxism is a strong theory. Gender theory is a strong theory. A weak theory, on the other hand, does not account for everything and therefore leaves different readings open. I would argue that research-based performance *makes weak theory*; it does not give answers or solutions, but creates spaces of possibility.

4. Paranoia is a theory of *negative affects*. Paranoia masquerades itself as an objective quest for truth but is driven by negative affects such as pain, which Sedgwick exemplifies with Freud's strong theory of the pleasure principle:

> Freud subsumes pleasure seeking and pain avoidance together [...] as though the two motives could not themselves radically differ. [...] this Freudian schema silently installs the anxious paranoid imperative, the impossibility but also the supposed necessity of forestalling pain and surprise, as "reality" – as the only and inevitably mode, motive, content, and proof of true knowledge.[261]

Sedgwick uses Freud to demonstrate how critical theory is driven by anticipation of pain and pessimism and disregards seeking pleasure, which also means that positive affects such as joy are regarded as misleading. Research-based performance does not aim to tear a theoretical text apart but works with accumulation: finding research, sampling research, and composing choreographies, set designs, or rhythms of research. This approach may appear uncritical, if not naive, from a theoretical perspective, but I would argue that it could instead be seen as a mode of thinking through material.

5. Paranoia places its faith in exposure. It is about exposing what is invisible, hidden forgotten. A paranoid reading practice believes that there is an underlying truth that just needs to be uncovered. Paranoia is suspicious of everything that is visible and acts as if "its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, some-

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260 Sedgwick quotes affect theorist Silvan S. Tomkins for a definition of "strong theory": "Any theory of wide generality [...] is capable of accounting for a wide spectrum of phenomena which appear to be very remote, one from the other, and from a common source. This is a commonly accepted criterion by which the explanatory power of any scientific theory can be evaluated." Quoted in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 134. See also Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, vol. 2 (New York: Springer, 1963), 433–4.

261 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 137.

how get its story truly known".[262] Sedgwick points to Paul Ricoeur's concept of a "hermeneutics of suspicion", which captures similarities in the writings of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. Literary theorist Rita Felski has explained the concept as a mode of interpretation that avoids obvious meanings in order to unmask less visible and less flattering truths.[263] This mode of interpretation and exposing lies and illusions has installed critical habits that may have made it harder to unpack the implications of local conflicts.[264] Sedgwick argues that strong theories focus on exposure, but that many inequalities in society are quite visible. One of her examples is the human rights controversy around torture and disappearance in Argentina during the dictatorship, which "marks, not an unveiling of practices that had been hidden or naturalized, but a wrestle of different frameworks *of* visibility."[265] In Chapters 4 and 5 I will seek to wrestle with these different frames of visibility in relation to torture in Argentina, among other places. I will inevitably reproduce moments of paranoia, not least the desire for exposure. What is important to underline here is that research-based performance does not aim at exposing one truth. It can use hermeneutics, deconstruction, or psychoanalysis not as a concluding framework but rather as elements in the collective enunciation of thoughts. In the act of identifying paranoia, Sedgwick performs paranoia herself, but this paradox seems to be an inescapable ingredient of any critical practice.

As an alternative to paranoia, Sedgwick proposes a "reparative reading practice" that seeks to give room to a different range of affects and risks and thereby open for other understandings of contemporary society.[266] I would argue that her book *A Dialogue on Love*, in which she brings together her account of getting breast cancer with the notes of her therapist, could be seen as a reparative *writing* practice.[267] I do

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262 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 138.

263 Rita Felski, "Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion", *M/C Journal* 15 (2012).

264 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 124. Importantly, Sedgwick expands the notion of hermeneutics of suspicion to a variety of theoretical positions including for instance gender theory or identity politics.

265 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 140.

266 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 150. Sedgwick's identification of a "reparative reading practice" has inspired a number of theorists and artists to write, read, and create differently. Visual artist Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld has developed during her PhD fellowship what she calls a "reparative critical practice" as a model for her artistic work. See her "Time in the Making: Rehearsing Reperative Critical Practices", PhD dissertation, Copenhagen University, 2015. Art historian Mathias Danbolt has forcefully worked through concepts such as "queering" and "reparative" in order to address history, politics, and sexuality. See, for instance, his "Touching History: Art, Performance, and Politics in Queer Times", PhD dissertation, University of Bergen, 2013.

267 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999). The book is a meditation on death, depression, and gender, and combines Sedgwick's prose and poetry with her therapist's notes.

not propose that research-based performance represents a reparative practice – although some performances may do so – but as described above, several elements of the reparative practice are found in how research-based performance seeks to work in a different way. Further, Sedgwick's perception of the performativity of knowledge can illuminate what is at stake in research-based performance:

> What does knowledge *do* – the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How*, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?[268]

The performativity of knowledge – the idea "that knowledge *does* rather than simply *is*" – is important to highlight when speaking about research-based performance.[269] Knowledge in these performances is not more performative than other knowledge, but research-based performance points to the fact that knowledge does something. Knowledge is never "innocent". Further, research-based performance unfolds a performative exchange between practice and research because of the shifts between the two – they work with and are worked by each other.

Relating Research-Based Aesthetics to the Present Project

In my project I ask how art and research can exchange strategies: in the performances I use various research formats, such as theory and interviews, and in this dissertation I use performative strategies such as different voices and informal language. Both formats are *compositions of knowledge*, but in different ways. The continuous shuttling between art and research enables the inhabitation of a position of uncertainty: inhabiting uncertainty, I try to be constantly ready to give up knowledge and security in order to consistently rethink any structure from within which or in relation to which I may be working. Sedgwick's reparative reading or Rogoff's criticality are examples of weak theories that do not claim to explain everything but keep

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268 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 124.

269 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 124. For more thorough analyses of the performativity of knowledge one should examine theorist Judith Butler's understanding of how gender is performed, Michel Foucault's conception of how power is based on knowledge, and Derrida's critique of J. L. Austin's speech act theory emphasising the citationality or iterability of all signs: Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981); Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

interpretation open.

Inhabiting a position between art and research causes a double fear of not being taken seriously as a researcher in the academic institution and, at the same time, of not being taken seriously as an artist in the art institution. Queer theorist Gavin Butt questions the implicit values of "seriousness" of academic scholarship in the essay "Scholarly Flirtations". He argues that flirting with not being taken seriously has been necessary for him in order to develop his queer scholarship and find another way of writing history – *queerly*. At the end of the essay, Butt recognises that there is a risk of betraying the potential of critical flirtation in the act of describing it: "if I am advocating a 'knowing' form of critical flirtation here, where flirtation becomes self-conscious metaphor for the activity of critical engagement, am I risking making flirtation over into some serious form of critical engagement, thereby betraying it in he process?"[270] The risk and fear of betrayal are acutely present in a project like mine. I use Sedgwick's concept of weak theories in order to ask for different strategies of "queering knowledge". As I asked in the introduction: how is it possible to perform knowledge differently in research-based performance without risking simply reproducing known modes of knowledge? How to risk and continue risking not being taken seriously? How to avoid transforming the reflection on research-based practice into a serious theoretical representation of paranoid suspicion?

One way to approach these dilemmas is to insist that research-based performance is not a method. I find it helpful to look at Derrida, who argues that "deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one".[271] Thus, it cannot be reappropriated or domesticated by academic institutions. Rather, it is an event that takes place. I would like to borrow this argument – without domesticating it – and propose that research-based performance should not be reduced to a methodological toolbox, nor should the art institution or the academic institution hijack it. It takes place in the durational making and thinking of the research-based performance, before, during, and after the punctual performance in front of an audience.

I focus not on the broad discussion of knowledge production within the arts and its economic implications but rather on art's capacity

270 Butt, "Scholarly Flirtations", 192.

271 Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend", in David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Derrida and Differance* (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 3.

to instigate material and immaterial spaces for thinking.[272] However, these spaces clearly live through different types of knowledge, including knowledge that cannot be measured, knowledge collapse, knowledge as authority, and non-knowledge (the state of not knowing), not least because "knowledge" is the word we have at our disposal. The aim of research-based aesthetics is not to collect an assembly of tools that can be used to create "good" research-based performances. This would inevitably fail – and not in a good way. Rather, the aim is to draw the contours of an aesthetics that can encircle the frames and potentialities of research-based performance:

- Research-based performance uses and produces research.
- Research-based performance intersects objectivity and subjectivity.
- Research-based performance establishes relations between different fields of knowledge and non-knowledge.
- Research-based performance questions the foundation of the knowledge conveyed.
- Research-based performance has a question or problem as dramaturgical motor.
- Research-based performance needs a spectator to combine the artistic sensations with the lines of thought.
- Research-based performance dissolves the boundaries between theoretical thinking and artistic doing.
- Research-based performance breaks down knowledge hierarchies.
- Research-based performance is thinking as a material event.[273]

Materiality plays an important role in understanding how the sensuous and aesthetic elements affect the experience and thinking of the spectator. Thus, before closing this chapter, I will briefly touch upon the materiality in research-based performance.

The Status of Materiality in Research-Based Performance

My focus on human thinking in research-based aesthetics could be questioned from an object-oriented perspective. Against a backdrop of philosopher Graham Harman and Susan Sontag I will trace mate-

272 For a longer discussion see Maharaj, who argues that the idea of artistic knowledge production leads to the question "'What sort of knowledge?' Hard on its heels comes 'What marks out its difference, its otherness?' Should we not rather speak of *non-knowledge* – activity that is neither hard-nosed know-how nor its ostensible opposite, ignorance?" See Maharaj, "Know-how and No-How", 1. See also the Introduction and Chapter 1.

273 I will return to this in Chapter 6.

riality as an erotic encounter in performance. Consequently, I will argue that the material and sensuous dimensions coexist with the reflective dimension in research-based performance.

Object-oriented ontology has influenced both theoretical writing and artistic/curatorial practice since philosopher Graham Harman coined the term "object-oriented philosophy" in 1999.[274] Object-oriented ontology is an attempt to define the autonomous existence of objects, to reject the privileging of human existence over the existence of non-human objects.[275] In his essay "The Third Table" Harman describes the real object through a critical treatment of A. S. Eddington's two tables: "The familiar table of everyday life and the same table as described by physics."[276] Harman draws a parallel between these two tables and C. P. Snow's concept of the two cultures: the humanities and the sciences.[277] The first table, or the first culture, represents the humanities, while the second table, or second culture, represents science. Harman's objection is that both are equally wrong or equally unreal. The scientist reduces the table downwards to tiny particles invisible to the eye. The humanist reduces the table upwards to a series of effects on people and other things. The real table is a *third table*, lying between the two others, and it represents *a third culture* – that of the arts, which do not reduce tables to electrons or to table effects on humans.[278] The real table – the table of the arts – is a reality deeper than any theoretical or practical encounter with it:

> It emerges as something distinct from its own components and also withdraws behind all its external effects. Our table is an intermediate being found neither in subatomic physics nor in human psychology, but in a permanent autonomous zone where objects are simply themselves.[279]

Harman further states that *the real* is something that cannot be known, only loved. Access to the third table must be indirect – just

274 Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2002).

275 See Graham Harman, "The Third Table", *100 Notes - 100 Thoughts, No 085*, dOKUMENTA 13 (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2012).

276 Arthur Stanley Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), ix.

277 C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

278 It is important to note that Harman's third culture does not coincide with the idea of the third culture as described in the 1995 book *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution*, in which editor John Brockman discusses several scientists who communicate their ideas directly to the general public. John Brockman (ed.), *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

279 Harman, "The Third Table", 10.

like erotic speech. He presents an idea of turning philosophy into an art and thereby restoring its character as eros. One could object that, when we talk about producing an erotic knowledge of objects, we often think about the materiality of the objects, and Harman describes objects as "ghostly objects withdrawing from all human and inhuman access, accessible only by allusion and seducing us".[280] But perhaps this is exactly the point: that the erotic is not material. Or at least, not for Harman. The third table cannot be verified or known, so materiality has to be renegotiated. If we follow Harman, art represents a privileged practice of accessing the real. In the case of research-based performance, I would argue that we may consider a multi-layered table consisting of thinking from the sciences and the humanities but performing through what Harman calls "erotic speech", never with direct access to reality, and never with the aim of reducing "the table" to electrons or to table effects – to bits of truth or hermeneutic understanding.

Following the erotic as figure, we may look at Sontag's essay "Against Interpretation", which argues that we should stop reducing art to its content and start describing the sensuous surface of art:[281]

> What we do not need is to assimilate art into thought or worse, art into culture. What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. In place of hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.[282]

This is a seductive statement. But what does this "erotics of art" look like, sound like, act like? How can Harman's third table and Sontag's erotics of art be understood if we are speaking about performance? Performance creates not objects but situations, events, or live tableaux. Performance *is* a speculative practice. So if we speculate a bit about "an erotics of art" within performance, what would it be like? The first problem to address is what constitutes eroticism. An answer to this question would demand a vast study of sources drawing on especially philosophy, psychoanalysis, cultural history, and artistic representations. Sontag does not provide an answer; she just provides the term at the very end of her essay. Thus, what follows here should be read as propositions pointing to the performance practice that fol-

280 Harman, "The Third Table", 12.

281 Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation", in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (Penguin: London, 1983), 95–104.

282 Sontag, "Against Interpretation", 104.

lows in the next two chapters.

I think that the erotic has very much to do with the temporality of the encounter. When the subject has an erotic encounter with the other, time disappears – and a space for pleasure and waiting is opened. Perhaps we can transfer this figure to the erotic encounter in performance – nothing is happening and everything is happening, because all kinds of continuations are possible. The erotic meeting and the performance are at their best when they have the potential to fail. Uncertainty is at the centre of the erotic meeting and the performance. If we consider an erotics of performance, important questions would be: how can you touch the skin of the spectator without necessarily touching? What kind of exchange exists between performer and audience – who owes what to whom? What value does the work have? What economy exists in the erotic/artistic encounter?[283]

The aim here is point to the materiality of research-based performance. I have done so by tracing what we could call "an erotics of performance". An erotics is to be understood not in romantic or naive terms but as a concrete suggestion for how to read the materiality and sensuous surface of research-based performance. Research-based performance provides a space for thinking, in which the spectator can combine aesthetic, sensory, and reflective elements.

Closing Remarks before Intermission

In this chapter I have developed a conceptual framework for a research-based aesthetics. The aim of research-based aesthetics is to look at how performance uses and produces research and to think critically about the intersection of art and thinking. Both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 served as initial manoeuvres: in Chapter 1 I sought to conceptualise the field, and in Chapter 2 I have reflected on my first research-based performance – the performance lecture *Precarious Life*. In Act 2, I will examine how a research-based practice works by immersing myself into the material of my second performance, *This is for her*. The conceptual framework that I have developed in this chapter is present as an undercurrent supporting my theoretical and

283 In order to develop an erotics of performance, one would have to include philosopher George Bataille. In *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* Bataille examines the erotic through the themes of taboo and sacrifice, transgression and language, death and sensuality, drawing on a number of literary and philosophical sources. George Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1986). Further, it would be necessary to draw an analysis of writer Audre Lourde's term "the erotic", which redefines the understanding of the erotic as a source of feminine and political power in an oppressive patriarchal society. Audre Lourde, "Uses of the Erotic: Erotic as Power", in *Sister Outsider* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984), 53–9.

artistic choices. However, I will not seek to "demonstrate" what research-based aesthetics is, but will focus on the examination of a research-based performance practice taking place. In Chapter 4 and 5 I write about *This is for her*. I move slowly, trying to capture the circles, repetitions, and frustrations of how to practise artistic research and how to find an artistic way of representing and reflecting the researched material. Throughout this process I try to keep the double view of both doing artistic research for the performances and thinking about how I do research. These endeavours lead us to Chapter 6, in which I analyse how research-based performance creates, materialises, and disseminates research using fact-based, affective, and documentary strategies. This discussion serves as a stepping-stone to consider the concept of research-based aesthetics again on the basis of my own performances, analysis of other performances, and the theoretical framework discussed here. My closing remarks then will say something both about my practice in this project and about research-based performance in a wider perspective. But first, I will draw the curtain up for the second performance script, *This is for her*.

ACT II

THIS IS FOR HER

18. – 24. OKTOBER 2017

AF SOFIE VOLQUARTZ LEBECH

teater FÅR 302

Teater Får302 TeaterFÅR302 #får302 faar302.dk

Støttet af STATENS KUNSTFOND

This is for her (Script)

Prologue

I We want her to describe the pain.
We want to understand why.
We want to know.
We *want* to know.
In the beginning we want to see.
After a while we are not so interested.
It's the old discussion of looking or not looking.
Some say we should look.
Some say we should look away.
We need a clean victim.
We *need* a clean victim.
We want her to be more precise.
Please be more precise!

Figure 15, poster from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance. © Søren Meisner.

I. Argentina. The Dirty War 1974–83

I There was something about the atmosphere that reminded me of a theatre. Everything inside and outside the prison seemed very staged. Almost as if an audience was seated in the darkness. The police destroy. The army destroy. In the theatre you create something. When you do that performance, it has to be good. Important. It has to make people listen. It must never happen again … It was for fun. It happens all the time. It happens and happens and happens. Soon it will happen here too; perhaps it has already begun.

Are you recording this?

At the time I was teaching philosophy at the university. It was during the dictatorship – *Guerra Sucia* – The Dirty War – from 1974 to 1983. Thirty thousand people disappeared. I opposed the government, so they arrested me. First I was given warnings; they said I had to support them and make my students support them. If not, I would be punished. They were serious. One night they took me, and for more than a year they tortured me. But then I escaped. That's a story I can tell you later.

I was with my son when they arrested me. He was two. We were walking along the street when a group of policemen came towards us. They knew who I was. They didn't come to our home. They didn't warn me. They just grabbed me off the street with my son. He clung to me. They took us to the police station. He was afraid. Being there with him was horrifying. That evening they also arrested my husband. I never saw him again.

They told me to support the dictatorship, but I said, "No, I'm against it". They told me they would show me, who I was dealing with, and they hit my son – a two-year-old – and blood ran from his nose. I said, "Hit me, not him". And they said, "No we will hit him, so you understand why you must support us" … After a few hours they started torturing me.

Some days later they came to take him away. They said they would take him to my family. I didn't know if they were telling the truth. They were. He ended up living with my in-laws. I saw him again two years later, but he didn't

recognise me. He didn't want to be with me. He ran away from me.

I was moved to a new place. We drove through the city, I couldn't see anything, but soon I found out where we were. It was the military academy. The football World Cup was taking place in Buenos Aires that summer. The main stadium was, *is*, located close by. We could hear the matches. The shouts of joy. People singing in the streets. We could hear where we were. And we could smell it too. You never forget the smell of people; shit, piss, sweat, fear. The taste of tears. First they run, then they just stick to your skin. It's dirty, you can't wash, the dust sets in.

We were under the roof. It was summer, and some days it felt like we were burning up. They weren't real cells. Rather, small compartments. They were 2,5 m long, 75 cm wide and 1 m tall. Like coffins. We were the living dead. ~~Sometimes we were left in the coffins for days, lying handcuffed in our own piss with hoods covering our faces.~~ We were able to sit or lie down. It was dark. We tried communicating by banging on the wooden walls, but they played the radio very loud, so we could only hear the knocking when there were small gaps in the broadcast. If you needed the toilet, you had to call for the guard. Sometimes they came, other times they didn't. During winter it was cold. I didn't get blankets. Only sleep and torture. ~~Sleep and torture.~~

The cells for pregnant prisoners were on the same level. They were moved there when they were seven or eight months pregnant. They gave birth in the military hospital. Then they came back, and later they disappeared. We never saw the babies. ~~I was so lucky not to give birth in prison.~~ Much later we found out that the babies were adopted by childless army couples or couples who supported the army as part of the government's "reorganisation process". They said the children were not to blame for their parents' mistakes, their misconceptions. The children were never told. Imagine that. Imagine growing up with people who support the system that killed your parents.

Do you know the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo? They are the grandmothers of the adopted children. They began searching for their grandchildren in the late '70s. They knew that

their daughters were pregnant when they were taken. They believed that their grandchildren were alive somewhere. And they were right.

Did they have a plan? I don't know. I don't know whether they intended to release us at some point or whether our death sentence had already been passed. Sorry, can I do that again? Was there an overall plan? I don't know. I don't know if they intended to release us at some point, or if our death sentence had already been passed. We knew nothing. Were we going to be tortured? Today? Tomorrow? Would we disappear completely? During the dictatorship five thousand men and women went through the military academy. Only two hundred survived. I survived. It was located in the city. That's hard to understand. People walked passed it every day on their way to work.

We were tortured in the basement … it was divided into smaller rooms. One was named the "egg tray" – the walls were coated with egg trays to muffle the screams. Why do you always get tortured in the basement? Is it so people can't hear you? Or is it because the perpetrators want to be far from heaven and closer to hell?

In the beginning it was all the time, every day, every hour, every minute, interrogation and torture. There were many kinds of torture. There was something we called football torture. You are the ball. Sometimes they hang you from the ceiling. Sometimes they give you an electric shock. They chain you up, cover your head with a hat, and give you an electric shock. We called that one the opera torture. The sound in your head. Some people were given enough morphine to become addicted, and then the morphine was taken away from them. There was a lot of pain. But … it's complicated.

When I speak about it, it happens again. I see their faces. I hear their voices. I feel their bodies … You want to know what is coming for you in the darkness. Clothes offer no protection. They can be ripped to pieces … There is physical torture, and there is mental torture. You wait. They come to humiliate you. They laugh at you. They pick you up at night and take you to a place of execution. They cover your eyes and start shooting and you think: Now, I'm going to die. But

they don't kill you.

On Wednesdays the whole place was on edge – almost quivering. It was the day people disappeared. ~~We hoped they had been released but knew they probably weren't.~~ The prisoners were selected at 5 p.m. They were told they were being transferred to a normal prison in the south of Argentina. But they were drugged and thrown out from airplanes into the Atlantic or the Río de la Plata. Later, the bodies were found washed up on the beaches.

What is the worst thing about torture? The worst thing is that your life totally depends on another person – the perpetrator. You are tortured. You see others being tortured. You notice people disappear. You think they have died, but you don't know. *Not knowing* is torture. I didn't know what happened to my husband, to my son, and I didn't know if they knew that I was still alive. They told me several times that they would release me if I supported them but I didn't trust them. I believed that once I gave in I would disappear too. If you are tortured, you remain tortured. It never goes away.

I witnessed some of my students being raped. I didn't want to watch, but they forced me to. They wanted names. Who would I betray? What should I say? They told me they would kill them. I didn't know what to believe. Kill young students? ~~The students were furious when the military junta seized power.~~ At the beginning no one believed they could be killed for political resistance.

The information was not important to them. The torture was. ~~From time to time they'd let people go just so the outside world would get to know about what was happening behind the walls - what could happen if you were politically active.~~ They wanted to demonstrate their financial and military power. The ones who were taken were just the visible people. The armed activists were invisible. They lived underground and carried weapons and poison to take if they were caught. Of course, many of them were taken, but a lot of the people who were taken were intellectuals, students, or union members. My husband and I were members of a leftist organisation – back then we were all leftists – he was a union rep and handed out flyers. That's all it took.

Of course I also knew people who went further. My best friend became a militant. We went to university together in the late '60s. We studied medicine. He wanted to be a psychiatrist. I wanted to be a surgeon. He wasn't political at all, but I took him to a meeting. Somehow he got involved with one of the militant groups – *Montoneros* – and he advanced very quickly. *He* began carrying weapons. *I* changed to philosophy and started teaching after I graduated. He had to flee with his wife and child when the regime started tightening the grip in the mid-'70s. Later they returned, thinking it was safe. Then they were taken.

If I had to describe the country back then ... There was an atmosphere that terrified people. When you saw the army or the police, you panicked. Torture is an effective way of controlling the population. I remember an incident when I was on the train and noticed my brother's friend sitting across from me. He looked away. He avoided my gaze, so I didn't greet him. Back then you didn't want to be associated with someone in the danger zone. You never knew what might trigger an arrest.

If you want, I can tell you how I escaped. If not, I won't. At some point I was admitted to the military hospital with an infection. The treatment wasn't very good, and I was in a lot of pain. I knew they'd kill me; they just weren't going to kill me yet. One month later they picked me up for interrogation. The interrogation took place in an ordinary room at the hospital. They beat me harder than ever before. Tore hair from my scalp. Burned me with cigarettes. After that I couldn't stand the smell of smoke. I had lost 20kg and was just a bag of bones. They said they would kill me. I said nothing. It was as if they had become bored of torturing me. They dragged me into the courtyard. One of the guards stayed with me. He seemed very tired and said, "Wait here, we are going to kill you." I said OK, and closed my eyes. When I opened them, he had disappeared into the building. So I ran. Away. They must have thought I couldn't move any more, that I had stopped resisting. I wasn't even handcuffed. The military academy borders the railway. The area is just surrounded by a wall. I ran to the wall and climbed on top of a wagon to get across. I made that decision in ten seconds

and managed it in twenty. It was completely impossible, but I did it. I got out. No one saw me. I ran along the railroad, two or three kilometres, until I saw a white house. I knocked on the door, they opened, and I said that I had run away, that I had been tortured and that they would kill me. They let me in. They arranged a truck ride for me … sorry … they arranged a truck ride for me out of town that very evening. I was so lucky. When you survive, you can't understand. Why me?

The next couple of weeks we drove north until we arrived at the Brazilian border. Brazil was also a dictatorship, but it was much safer for us than Argentina. There I met others in exile. Most of them coped by doing odd jobs. No one ever tells you that it's really expensive to live in exile. If you don't have something to sell or some money with you, you immediately become part of the exile underclass. That's why many people went back home, risking their lives. And this is how I was able to send word to my family. I waited and waited. One day my in-laws arrived with my son. They told me that my husband had disappeared, and they gave me money to travel further away with my son to safety. I never discovered what happened to my husband. I know when and where he was taken. That's all.

I suffered for a long time. The days were light and heavy at the same time. It's like the tide. In Spanish we call it *la marea*. *Marea* means both dizziness and the tide. That's how it is. The pain comes suddenly and then withdraws. You are dizzy in life. You are afraid of falling and never being able to get up again. Death is not pain. We fear death, but really it is the end of pain. That's the attraction of suicide.

Yes. I wanted to kill myself. Many times. Sometimes it comes back. Imagine if you suddenly committed suicide after all these years. Would it be a waste not to have done it earlier? ~~All the times you wanted to, but didn't.~~ Or is it enough to live as long as you possibly can? I often wonder why people commit suicide after the worst is over. After the torture, after the war, after the winter – in times of peace. The biggest choice is to continue living. To hold on. To move on to become a person again.

Having a child can't save you. When the pain comes,

nothing can save you. But it gives hope. Love and pain are parallel emotions. I have a photo of my son in the bath … smiling … You may love the child, but it doesn't take the pain away. My son has been destroyed. What happened continues inside. He feels like his identity has been taken away. That history has robbed him of the possibility of having a normal life and a family. His entire life is shaped around the loss of his father. It's easier for me. I survive by remembering. The worst is ignorance.

Torture breaks you down physically and mentally. They take your mind and your body away from you. I was healthy before, and sick after. They hit me on the head so many times that something broke inside. I stop breathing when I sleep. I had an operation, but I still have to use a mask. Sometimes I have nightmares. I'm back in prison. I'm trying to escape but I can't. I don't know what to do, and suddenly I wake up.

I went back once. The buildings are still there, like monuments. There are ghosts everywhere. So many people disappeared. I don't believe for one second that it was only thirty thousand. People don't talk about it. They say it's important to remember, but they don't talk about it. I visited my friend's sister. She lives in the countryside. Down south. She is still hiding. She showed me her gun and said, "This time they are not going to get me". *Nunca terminamos de salir*. It may be over, but we'll never escape.

Who is to blame? Personally, I think the Minister of Finance and the senior figures in the army. The blame is political and economic. I often wonder who was in the army. Who was the soldier? Who was the policeman? I didn't know anyone. My friends didn't know anyone. But it can't be true that no one knew them. Were they just shadows? I *refuse* to blame individuals. But I'm tempted. I believe you can say no. You *can* say no. ~~No. No. No.~~

If we should stop here? It's up to you.

II. Iraq. War on Terror 2001–13.

Episode 1: Sleep deprivation

You "I Love You", by Barney the Dinosaur, is one of the most used songs for torture and interrogations in the US secret military prisons in Iraq. Sleep deprivation has the effect of making your brain and body stop working normally. Your thoughts are slower, and your will breaks down.

I At the beginning there is silence.

You In the future there will be pain.

Episode 2: Photos from Abu Ghraib

You In the photograph we see a woman and a man. They have their arms around one another. The man rests one hand on the woman's shoulder. She is shorter than him by a head. They are posing for the camera, smiling and giving a "thumbs-up" sign. The man has turquoise green plastic gloves on. The woman's naked arms and hands are visible. She's wearing a brown T-shirt and khaki-coloured trousers held up by a black belt. She has short hair parted three ways above her smiling eyes. She's leaning in toward the man. They stand in a corridor without windows lit by neon lights. The walls are yellow. The doors diarrhoea-brown. Sandy dust on the floor, a piece of paper, a cardboard box, ventilators in the ceiling. A door to a cell is open. It's the ward for dangerous prisoners. The woman has sneaked over here to be with the man. In front of the man and the woman is a pyramid of seven naked men. There is someone taking a picture. Later the woman says: "At the time I thought, I love this man, I trust this man with my life, OK, then he's saying, well, there's seven of them and it's such an enclosed area and it'll keep them together and contained because they have to concentrate on staying up on the pyramid instead of doing something to us."

I In April 2004 CBS News published the Abu Ghraib photos, showing a series of human rights violations: physical and sexual abuse, torture, rape, sodomy, and murder.

You The Bush administration avoided using the word "torture" and consequently referred to the actions as "abuse" or "humiliation".

I We look at photos of the female prison guards.

You – especially this woman.

I The woman with the man. The woman holding a leash attached to the neck of a prisoner who crawls after her. We read about the female interrogators. We hear the female

general explain what happened.

You Where did these women come from? Women are the ones waiting at home. Women are victims.

I Women get raped and murdered and left as widows and mothers without sons.

Episode 3: This woman

You She is born.
She goes to kindergarten.
Water jets in the back yard in summer.
She moves out of the city when she is two years old.
She chases squirrels.
She goes to school.
Most of the time she doesn't speak. It's called selective mutism.
She is afraid of the death penalty.
In school she is compared to a boy. The boy is compared to her.
Shame is used to control people.
When she is fourteen, she has sex on a bathroom floor.
Long road trips through the country.
Long winters. More winters and summers than autumns and springs.
She wants to be a storm chaser. She wants to be in the middle of storms.
She goes to college.
She works in a supermarket.
She marries someone.
Picnic on Sundays.
She makes the sandwiches.
She joins the army.
She goes to war.
She is happier where she is now.
She does not believe in regrets.
She is trying to do the right thing.
Sometimes she does something that she wouldn't have done before.
Then she feels dizzy.

Episode 4: More photographs

I In the photograph we see a woman. She half-smiles with a cigarette resting between her lips. Her hip leans out to the one side. She holds her arms like a gun. She points at a prisoner who is forced to masturbate for forty-five minutes. It's a birthday present from the man when she turns twenty-one.

Episode 5: Female Interrogation

You In the War on Terror, female interrogators are trained to use their sexuality. The aim is to awaken male prisoners' experience of shame and humiliation. Sometimes the opposite occurs, and feelings develop between the victim and the perpetrator.

Approach him. Shove your breasts in his line of sight. Ask the question again.

I Hun nærmer sig ham. Presser sine bryster ind i hans synsfelt. Stiller spørgsmålet igen.

You Tell him to take his clothes off. He has to stand naked in front of you... It's working.

I Hun siger, at han skal tage tøjet af. Han skal stå nøgen foran hende. Det virker.

You Offer him bacon and eggs several times a day. That's all he gets. Bacon and eggs.

I Hun tilbyder ham bacon og æg flere gange om dagen. Det er alt hvad han får. Bacon og æg.

You Dance for him. Make him kneel in front of you.

I Hun danser for ham. Hun får ham til at knæle for sig.

You Undress.

I Hun klæder sig af.

You Place a pair of used panties over his face.

I Hun anbringer et par brugte kvindetrusser henover hans ansigt.

You Show him pictures of naked men.

I Hun viser ham billeder af nøgne mænd.

You Say he's hot.

I Hun siger, han er lækker.

You Sit on his lap.

I Hun sætter sig på hans skød.

You Naked.

I Hun er halvt nøgen.

You Touch yourself.

I Hun rører ved sig selv.

You Wipe menstrual blood on his face.

I Hun tørrer menstruationsblod af i hans ansigt.

Episode 6: Pyramid of responsibility

You We need to take a moment to climb up the pyramid of responsibility. A pyramid is a complex structure. It takes many people to construct a pyramid. At the top of our pyramid in the prison in Abu Ghraib is a woman. She is a general. Chosen to lead fifteen prisons and detention centres in Iraq, including Abu Ghraib. She has no experience leading prisons. She says:

"Prisoners under my watch are treated humanely and fairly. Conditions in the prison are better than many Iraqi homes. The prisoners are treated so well that I am concerned they don't want to leave."

Under her watch the number of prisoners rises from 700 to 7,000 in Abu Ghraib. There is no plan for how to release, or reincorporate, these prisoners back into society. Information about the torture leaks out. She is fired from her position. She says that she "didn't know" about the torture. She says that the soldiers who conducted the torture were sent by the Secretary of Defense. She saw his signature on their papers. He must have known. She didn't know what was happening. She probably should've known, but … maybe it's easier to blame her than it is to blame the Secretary of Defense.

Because – we need a face that can take the blame. We need a person who can cover the errors in the system. We need a picture of her in a prison, which she cannot leave, with bombs falling outside and neon lights shinning inside. She's dragging a naked prisoner behind her, who's bleeding and gasping for breath, Abu, Khalid, Nawaf, Mohamed, Marwan, Ziad, Hani, she goes over the limit of what is humane, because it's her, and not the system, that is sick.

Episode 7: Iraq

I They are asked to come out of the rooms into the corridor. They are asked to undress and lie on top of each other in a pyramid.

They are asked to remain still. The man and the woman think it is practical: there's seven of them, and it's such an enclosed area and it'll keep them together and contained because they have to concentrate on staying up on the pyramid instead of doing something to the man and the woman. Later the woman says:

"If the media hadn't exposed the pictures to that extent, then thousands of lives would have been saved. Yeah, I took the photos but I didn't make it worldwide."

(Sings) "Down the Drain with Love."

You She sings and then she remembers how her mother used to say that she couldn't sing, and then she corrects herself because actually she only said it *once* and she supposes many mothers have said something like that. But it stuck with her. And then she is thinking – this is so obvious – that people are different and what sticks with one person doesn't necessarily stick with another one. And that's the reason that the after-effects of torture are very different from individual to individual.

Episode 8: She once read that Being in love is like being in Auschwitz

I That's it. A man and a woman.

You In a hotel room.

I He takes pictures.

You Creates an archive of love-making.

I She always thinks of the other times.

You He only thinks of the now.

I That's not true though.

You It's just something he says.

I That's it. A man and a woman.

You In a prison.

I They meet in each other's cells.

You That's how they make love.

I He makes her do things.

You He gets her pregnant.

I Then he leaves her.

You And marries someone else.

I This woman.

You Torture Chick. Trailer Trash Torturer.
She always aims to please. She did everything he wanted her to do. She didn't want to lose him.

I At that moment she wasn't herself. At that moment she wasn't the person standing here right now. At that moment she was different.

You She still maintains that she does not regret what she did.

I She says:

You "Sorry? For what I did? All I did was stand in the pictures."

I She gives birth to a boy.

You He looks like the man. The man asks for a DNA test.

I She spends two years in prison. She is convicted for torture and prisoner abuse during the occupation of Iraq.

You We can't believe that this is the girl who had water jets in the back yard. We can't believe that this is the girl who cannot let go of the man she loves. We can't believe that she is the one who wanted to be a storm chaser. We are thinking about a picture of her in a landscape chasing a dark blue storm approaching from the background, firelight as a fallen strip at the bottom of the horizon, tornadoes, thunder storms, lightning, cloud formations, and we are thinking about all the names she has given to them: (*together)* Katrina, Amanda, Laura, Dolly, Sally Berta, Hanna ...

I ... she is all of them. And we hear her say that the screams are chasing her in her sleep and when she is awake, that the sounds and lights cut through reality and take her back to the prison, and we are thinking about a landscape beyond death.

Intermezzo: blackout and thunder/bombs.

Episode 9: Question time

You

Is the space dark or light?
What events have left traces in your body?
Are you a racist?
Are you honest?
Have you ever killed someone?
Have you ever killed something?
How did you do it?
If you were to murder us, what would you do?
If you were to murder a group of people, what would you do?
Do you believe in Western society?
Do you believe in democracy?
What is pain?
What happened to the lost moments of the past?
What happens to your lost memories?
Are you funny?
Are you clever?
Are you pretty?
Are you ready to die?
How would you like to die?
How does electricity work?
Would you like me to touch you?
Are you a violent person?
Am I likeable?
What do you want?
Are you in love?
How long do you think that will last?
Have you ever had your heart broken?
How many times can a person have their heart broken?
What is a good person?
Are you a good person?
Is life better for good people?
If I cried now, what would I cry for?
Name seven kinds of joy.
Name seven kinds of torture.
Is there something after death?

Episode 10: Show Time

You This is it. We are in it.

I We know that something has happened to the moral staging of us as a good nation. From being the good guys, we are in all ways with the bad guys. It is us who do these things.

You *Perhaps* we do not do the act, but *perhaps* our soldiers have driven the car with the soldiers who did it. *Perhaps* we collaborate with the intelligence services, which we know do it. *Perhaps* we do it just once in a while.

I We know that there is something eroticised in torture. But we don't talk about it because we need a clean victim who is not complicit. There is no way to stay completely clean.

You We know that there are many relationships between victim and perpetrator. It is certainly not pure hatred. It is also disappointment and loyalty. It is water and a chance to go to the bathroom.

I We know that torture makes people scared shitless. For it to happen again, or happen to someone they know. We know that torture is not about information. It never has been.

You But if the man with information about the bomb sat in this room, should we not torture him? I mean, it always works on TV.

III. Therapy. Homecoming.

You I don't sleep anymore. The nights have become a rush towards the border of sanity. Tonight I had been appointed by the regime to stand in the front line when all were going to die. It gave me a sensation of lightness.
I didn't exist.
I don't exist.

I hope to be able to sleep at night. I hope to get rid of these mood swings, which drag me down and yank me up. I hope to give my brain some peace, so it slows down and doesn't burn out. I hope to be able to make choices that don't knock me over. I hope to get rid of this sense of eminent, total collapse. I hope to become a good mother.

There was a lot of time to think in prison. I hadn't spoken for more than a year when I started speaking again. While I didn't speak, I couldn't laugh or cry either.

I can't tell when I'm heading for the abyss. Because just before, there's a moment where I'm able to like myself, where I'm not scared of others, where I can participate in conversations, where I'm almost funny. But that brief moment always results in a fall where the silence fills me, and I hate myself and everyone else. On days like these I kill myself over and over again. In those depths there is no hope for improvement, only the longing to escape.

I don't feel that the meds are working.

The desire to get better exists behind the pain, no matter how urgent and brutal. It may sound irresponsible, almost childish or naive, that a person contemplating suicide and insufferable life should suddenly consider new beginnings. Starting a family, getting a new job, creating a new life, embracing new territories. Thinking new thoughts, feeling differently.

Some people say that *pain* exists in the present. But pain

takes place not only in the present but also in the future and the past. Sometimes the fear of pain is bigger than the pain itself. Pain is a carpet. You lie under it. Or it's like a blanket. You take it and cover your body. Pain makes time seem longer. A face in pain will always recognise another face in pain. Is it something in the eyes? A slightly crazed look. Not dead, but trembling, uneasy, and evasive. It's devastating to look into someone's eyes when you are at your worst.

Sometimes I go to the seaside and stare at the water. All of a sudden the distinction between sky and sea will disappear – and the tide comes in. With the tide, birds appear on the horizon like little blemishes. Dots breaking the shining surface reminding you of life. The waves begin to roar when the tide comes in. It could be a machine or a large ferry. I rush to the water's edge, and suddenly the intense sound of the sea shatters the silence.

I She is sitting. She is crying, she is smiling. In the prison cell, in the interrogation room, in the torture chamber, in the interview room for asylum seekers, and now, years later, in the therapy room. In each room she is telling a story – of course, to very different people and with very different intentions. Torture and therapy is for two. There is always another person.

When you are tortured you tell all kind of stories. When you arrive at another country or get back from war, you try to tell the *right* story. Therapy is an opening. You can tell what you are ashamed of. What you did wrong. But little by little you try to create a story again. A story that works for you.

~~We can't get rid of war. We have made some rules of war but in practice we know that it is hard to live up to these conventions.~~ When we began rehabilitating torture victims, we thought that the victim should talk and talk and talk. But sometimes it was too much. They came to relive the past. Now we tell them that they don't have to tell everything. ~~Many victims have one core experience, which they experience again and again. Often it was when they were most defenceless in a torture session.~~

In therapy she has to keep her role as a victim. She has been forced to torture others, but she can't say this, because she can't get treatment if she has been a perpetrator. And this might have been the worst part of the torture … She dreams about it at night and remembers it during the day.

Her nightmares are not incoherent, like our nightmares. They are exact repetitions of the experience. Every time she thinks about it, her teeth and vagina hurt. The brain remembers with all her senses. She smells how it was, she sees it, she hears it, she feels it.

Our goal is to reduce her anxiety. She has to become anxious, but not too much. Fifteen to twenty per cent for fifteen to twenty minutes a couple of times per week. Then the anxiety will slowly ebb away. Sometimes her anxiety

reaches ninety. That's too much.

She is ashamed. She is afraid of walking in the street. She fears that she might be arrested, even though she knows that she is not going to be. She doesn't go out. She isolates herself from her family. She stays in a room and think about what she could have done differently, how she could have saved the others. She is tired and loses focus.

Our goal is to make her function as a good working citizen. But it is not always possible. Torture *is not a state of emergency*. It works by being linked to everyday life. They placed a Coca-Cola can in the room. Every time she sees a Coke, she's back. It's about breaking trust. The first blow kills the trust in other people, and that trust can never be restored.

The normal treatment is ten to twelve months. In reality the treatment is never finished. Crisis will hit her harder. There will be divorces and deaths and illness and suicide and cancer and ...

Nobody can resist torture. Eventually everybody is broken. They take her brother in and torture him to death in front of her. And they say it is her fault because she did this or didn't do that. And she believes them. She believes her perpetrators, and she believes that nobody will ever believe her.

You The cell is very small. The walls are grey. They are made out of concrete. There is a window. But it is placed so high up that it is impossible to look out. Sometimes dust comes in through the window. Outside the streets lead to the city and the tourist attractions. Perhaps the pyramids, perhaps the Holiday Inn, with its bullet holes and bomb craters, perhaps the Great Wall or the Wailing Wall. It's incredibly far away.

I We are not saying anything about nationality. Or race. We are not saying anything about outsourced torture. We are just saying that it's far away from us.

You It is incredibly far away.

I We are just saying that the history is different there.

You The history is so different there.

I And the architecture is different.

You The architecture is very different there with features of French or British colonialism.

I But never Danish.

You No, never Danish.

I There is the victim, and there is the perpetrator.

You *This is for her.*

You It is true that I'm standing.

I It is true that I have secrets.

You It is true that secrets define us as human beings.

I It is true that I hit him.

You It is true that his face was purple from the blood collecting behind the skin.

I It is true that I saw it.

You It is true that I only loved once.

I It is true that I tried to do the right thing.

You It is true that I am lying.

I It is not true that I am guilty.

You It is not true that I don't have secrets.

I It is not true that I would like to have secrets.

You It is not true that I saw it.

I It is not true that you didn't do it.

You It is not true that we will survive.

I It is not true that I hit him.

You It is not true that he had streams of blood flowing down his back.

International Torture Victim

You She's invisible.

I Perhaps there's never anyone who've seen her.

You She walks down the street without anyone noting.

I She lies down next to her lover without him noting.

You Her family doesn't see her.

I Her friends don't see her.

You She can't even see herself.

I She looks in the mirror and sees nothing. No sense. No goal. She's worthless, powerless ...

You Can you see her? Can you see her?

I Sometimes she dreams that she flies over it all and sees herself standing in a room full of people.

You The others can't see her. She's a slender contour without content. She knows she is there, but she can only see the shape.

I Hold that image. Fill out the shape. Say it.

You It's too difficult.

I Say it.

You I'd like to be seen. Love me. Touch me.

I It's too difficult. She can't say it. She can't believe it. It's all about belief.

You Wake up at night, fighting sleep, can't be with someone,

can’t be with myself, can’t say anything, can’t do anything, can’t make up my mind, can’t make up my fucking mind, nothing matters, can’t cry, can’t see anything, standing still and sinking, sinking further into the mud, sits in the hole, it’s fucking dark, only a simple chink of light, can’t hear anything, I don’t want to be here, I’ll just stand here, let me just stand here, I am so tired, I just want to sleep, no I cannot sleep, if I fall asleep, I’ll disappear.

4.

Torture, Therapy, and Testimony in *This is for her*

> In the beginning there is silence. In the future there will be pain. Let's begin.
>
> *I Love You You Love Me*[284]

In her seminal book *The Body in Pain* Elaine Scarry writes: "How is it that one person can be in the presence of another person in pain and not know it – not know it to the point where he himself inflicts it, and goes on inflicting it?"[285] In other words: how is torture possible? Scarry argues that physical pain inflicted by authorities leads to the unmaking of the victim's world. The making of the world, on the other hand, becomes possible through human creativity such as language, culture, or art.

In this chapter I examine the making of a performance about the unmaking and making of the world – a performance about torture and therapy. I focus on the representation and temporality of pain: which bodies and actions can we portray and which not? What is the temporality of torture? And can we understand these moments through staged reenactments or testimonies of violence or crisis? Here I will focus on testimony and discuss whether we can see torture as an isolated event and therapy as a scripted retelling of that event. In the next chapter I will examine how to reenact scenes of violence on stage.

At an early stage of the work process I decided to work with a three-piece structure for the performance, in which the first part focuses on the retelling of interviews with victims of torture, the second focuses on the reenactment of scenes of violence – in particular the photos from Abu Ghraib – and the third part focuses on therapy. I was interested in the complex relationship between the participa-

Figure 16, poster sketch from *I Love You You Love Me*, 2015. © Søren Meisner.

284 Text from the staged reading *I Love You You Love Me*, Appendix 1. The first part of the line appears in *This is for her*.

285 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 12.

tion in conflicts far away and the arrival back home of refugees and soldiers from the very same places. I reflected on the arbitrary mirroring between the retelling of a narrative – the act of testifying – in the torture situation, in the therapy room, and in the performance room. I wanted to develop a space on stage where we can think about torture and therapy. How much can be said through the language or the body? What power lies in different forms of documentary storytelling? And, can we find ways to narrate the pain of others? These questions became the starting-points for an examination of torture through different performative strategies.

In what follows I want to explore how narratives and testimonies work as *reality makers* in torture, therapy, and art. Reading Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, I discuss whether therapy and art can be seen as methods of *world-making*, collecting fragments of memory, making visible what is to be remembered and what not. By extension I read Shoshana Felman's *Testimony* in order to approach what it means to bear witness.[286] Against the backdrop of Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, I reflect on the function of therapy: does therapy help the victims of torture to create a narrative that works for them, or does it construct a victim identity in society that we can understand?[287]

There are two modes of thinking operating in tandem in my work: I work from practice to theory as well as from theory to practice. I reflect on my own performance work, I research critical theory, I look at artworks that have influenced my research process, and I reflect on the interviews I have made with victims of torture. My aim is to give a clear account of my performance trajectory and to show how critical theory and other modes of research buttress the formation of a research-based performance occupied with torture and therapy. Importantly, the reading of theory and the reading of artworks are both important in my performance research. An artwork about torture may appear as important as a study based on qualitative research or theoretical analysis. I am aware of this discrepancy and I will try to buttress how I oscillate back and forth between theory and artworks collecting different fragments of knowledge in order to create a performance.

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286 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 2.

287 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. I focus on critical theory rather than, for example, anthropological or psychological studies. This choice mirrors the aim of my artistic practice. I do not claim to look for solutions. Rather, I try to find thematic couples that broaden the perspective on each area – in this project, "therapy and torture" and "terror and autoimmunity".

The chapter is an inquiry into the exchange between performance and critical theory, and I write very little about the actual event of torture or the immense literature on the theme. For that purpose I would like to direct the reader to a few important works that have supported the first steps in my research, especially political scientist Darius Rejali's *Torture and Democracy*, which gives an introduction to how torture exists in modern democracy from the late nineteenth century to Abu Ghraib, and historian Alfred McCoy's *Torture and Impunity*, which traces the consequences of the "enhanced interrogation" techniques used in the War on Terror.[288] Both books provide an understanding of what I would call the "re-introduction of torture" within the US during the War on Terror. Not that torture had been non-existent before – as both Rejali and McCoy point out, democracies used torture throughout the twentieth century – but because the justification for enhanced interrogation techniques in the so-called "Torture Memos"[289] can be said to undermine the United Nations' "Convention against Torture",[290] thus legalising the use of torture for the first time since the 1980s. While these facts and discussions were important in my research process, they will not be the focus here, as they served as a backdrop in the performance.

I begin the itinerary with a description of the travel from the staged reading *I Love You You Love Me* (2015) to the performance *This is for her* (2017) in order to demonstrate the movements of a research-based work process. Thereafter, I work my way further into the darkness of the theme, discussing how to narrate the pain of others, how to testify, and why.

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288 Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). Alfred McCoy, *Torture and Impunity* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

289 The Torture Memos were a set of legal memoranda drafted by John Yoo as Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the United States and signed in August 2002 by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee. They advised the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Department of Defense, and the President on the use of enhanced interrogation: mental and physical torment, sleep deprivation, stress positions, and waterboarding, and argued that these acts, widely regarded as torture, might be legally permissible under an expansive interpretation of presidential authority during the War on Terror. For an overview see "A Guide to the Memos on Torture", *New York Times* (2005), accessed 14 January 2019, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/international/24MEMO-GUIDE.html?

290 The UN's definition of torture in a shortened version reads: "For the purposes of this Convention, the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions." "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984 entry into force 26 June 1987", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx.

The Formation of a Concept

The work is difficult because it is slow. It begins with a fiction: the writing of a concept. It begins with stepping into the unknown: interviews with different researchers and people who have a personal experience with torture. It begins with the attempt to find a victim who wants to talk. It begins with reading. I re-read *In the Penal Colony* (1919), by Kafka, and *Bildbeschreibung* (1985), by Heiner Müller. I wonder whether it is necessary to say more. It begins at the desk and in the studio. This is a written reenactment of a work process. It is to be believed and not to be believed at the same time. Believed because it is based on working notes and memories, and not to be believed because it is written long after the work took place.

The work took place at different times and locations between 2015, when I performed the staged reading *I Love You You Love Me* at Det Frie Felts Festival, Dansehallerne (Copenhagen), and 2017, when *This is for her* premiered at the Teater Får302 (Copenhagen). The work process consisted of three acts of research, which took place simultaneously: 1) interviews and reading; 2) writing and editing; and 3) studio work alone, and with performer Katrina Bugaj and sound designer Pelle Skovmand.[291] At the centre of the experiment were the questions "Why do we torture?" and "What are the effects and affects of torture?" I wanted to approach these questions through different forms of documentary storytelling on stage: reenactments of interviews with torture victims, and repetition of the arrangements of bodies that we know from the pictures from the Abu Ghraib prison. It soon proved difficult to find survivors who were prepared to talk about their experiences.[292] However, at the beginning of 2015, I interviewed the survivor Hussein Husseini, who was given therapy at DIGNITY (the Danish Institute Against Torture), and the therapist Lone Jacobsen, who works at the same place.[293] I interviewed the anthropologist Lotte Buch Segal, who works with torture victims, and I read about the complex relationship between victim and perpetra-

291 I borrow the term "acts of research" from Nelund, who uses it to ask, "how is knowledge production conceived as an act of research, in what do the act, the material, the research and the norm-breaking resistance consist?" Nelund, "Acts of Research", 27.

292 Thus, I began by reading literary testimonies about torture. I was particularly inspired by Shahla Talebi, *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), and Mohamedou Ould Slahi, *Guantánamo Diary* (Edinburgh and London: Canongate, 2015).

293 Hussein Husseini escaped from prison in Iran in 1989. Lone Jacobsen has worked at DIGNITY since its beginning in 1982 and before that in the medical group that was formed at Rigshospitalet in 1974 to research torture and its after-effects. Jacobsen has written a number of articles and the book *Torture Survivors*, which I used in my research. Lone Jacobsen, *Torture Survivors: A New Group of Patients* (Copenhagen: The Danish Nurses' Organization, 1990).

Figure 17, from *I Love You You Love Me*, 2015. Katrina Bugaj in front. Staged reading. © Søren Meisner.

tor.[294] Slowly my focus shifted from the victim at the moment of torture to the long-term effects of that torture. I became interested in the interrogation room and the therapy room. In each room the victim is asked to tell her story – of course, to very different people and with very different intentions. I became interested in the relations between torture, therapy, and time, and in the women taking part in torture.

The interviews I conducted were important not least because they pointed to the interview dimension of both torture and therapy. The torture situation and the therapeutic situation involve a meeting between two or more people, and both interrogation and therapy are structured around questions and answers. It is a paradox that torture and the treatment of torture unfold within similar frames. The interview between an artist and a victim in a research situation is also

294 Segal is Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen. Her research focuses on family relations and intimacy in the context of ongoing conflict. She has written a number of articles, contributions to books and the book *No Place for Grief*, which I have used in my research. Lotte Buch Segal. *No Place for Grief: Martyrs, Prisoners and Mourning in Contemporary Palestine* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

a meeting, and so is the performance situation where spectator and work meet.[295]

It became important for me to discover the different people participating in the shadow play of torture. Who is the person behind the victim and the perpetrator? Who were they before, and who will they become after? The temporal dimension of torture is crucial. We think that pain takes place in the present. But pain does also take place in the past and in the future. Sometimes the fear (*future*) of pain or the memory (*past*) of pain appears immense. I wanted to examine how the moment of torture stretches into the future when it is retold in different contexts. In my research many voices were speaking, and they delivered not only clear statements and facts but also fictions about truth and reality. The voices of the victim, the perpetrator, the therapist, and the researcher began to slide in and out of each other. In the studio I began walking backwards in repetitive circles, over and over, trying to recapture things from the past: memories, movements, and falls. I made numerous recordings where I tried to say what I now knew about torture, therapy, and time. And I transcribed these recordings with all the fumbling and hesitation that a non-edited talk contains. The other performer, Bugaj, and I began working with the physical representation of the photos from Abu Ghraib. We tried to repeat them, reenact them. It was difficult. We did not want to turn the representation of physical pain into a spectacle. We decided to use chairs instead of bodies for the reading and to return to the "problem" later. Much later in fact. Skovmand and I started working with water. Water as in waterboarding. Water as in thunderstorms. Water as in dripping prison pipes. Water as opposition to the dusty deserts where so many torture prisons are situated. This studio work was crucial for the development of *I Love You You Love Me* – and continued in the making of *This is for her*.

The staged reading took place in a black box. A Coca-Cola can and a water bucket on the floor. Bugaj and I were dressed in blue jeans and white T-shirts. We imitated a neutral, all-American look. Skovmand created a live soundscape consisting of different water sounds.

295 Most theatre has the structure of a meeting without being a dialogue. However, referring back to relational aesthetics, we can think of a number of performance artists who try to centre the artistic experience on the meeting and, by doing so, try to negotiate the public sphere in new ways. Examples are immersive performances made by performance collectives such as Danish SIGNA, in which the audience inhabit the performance space with the performers for a limited time frame or for the whole performance period. See "SIGNA", accessed 14 January 2019, https://signa.dk/. For more about immersive theatre see Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

We performed the texts as episodes separated with projected episode signs created by Søren Meisner. All the texts were written in the third person ("she") except a short testimony written in the first person. We read the text from different still positions on stage. Sometimes we made small choreographies referring to chosen gestures from the photographic archive of victims and perpetrators from Abu Ghraib.

The reading had a fragmented structure, which matched the intangibleness of the material, but it also mirrored the explorative character of the work process. After the reading, I began to make choices. I wanted to make more interviews with victims in order to expand the testimony of a victim on stage. I wanted to know more about Lynndie England, the female prison guard in the Abu Ghraib prison. And I wanted to examine Denmark's role as the ones participating in conflicts far away and as the ones offering therapy at home. I imagined a three-part structure for a performance with the title *This is for her*.

Figure 18, from *I Love You You Love Me*, 2015. Staged reading. © Søren Meisner.

Composition of *This is for her*

The dramaturgy of *This is for her* follows a three-part structure. The first part, "Argentina: The Dirty War 1974–1983. The Victim", is a solo documentary monologue in which I reenact interviews I conducted with victims of torture in Argentina in 2017. Though performed as a first-person narrative, the text mediates the voices and bodily affects of several people as they reflect on their lived reality during the dictatorship. On stage, I tried to remember and reproduce their gestures and intonations, thus creating a human archive of embodied testimonies.

The second part, "Iraq: War on Terror 2001–2003. The Perpetrator", takes us to the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and reflects on our current complicity in the use of torture in armed conflicts far away. There are two performers (Bugaj and me) on stage attempting to describe the perpetrator through different female characters from the Abu Ghraib prison: the prison guard, the interrogator, and the general. The texts are performed in a distanced way, describing an unnamed "she" and keeping the identity of the narrator unclear.

The third part of the performance, "Therapy: Homecoming", takes us home, discussing the effect of therapy for the victim of torture and for the soldier returning home from war. There are two of us on stage representing the victim, the soldier, and the therapist. The texts slide in an out of an "I", "she", "we", and "they" structure, pointing to the different positions in the performance of torture.

Where is the "you", one might ask? The "you" is the spectator watching from a distance, witnessing the testimony of the performance.

The Geographical and Temporal Dramaturgy: Torture *far away* and therapy *at home*

The performance marks a historical and geographical movement from Argentina (the victim) to Iraq (the perpetrator) to Denmark (therapy). In the late 1970s and early '80s Denmark accepted many political refugees from South America, and in 1982 DIGNITY (Danish Institute Against Torture) was founded in order to give specialist treatment to victims of torture.[296] Torture was considered as something that had been inflicted upon those who arrived in Europe as refugees and who were in turn treated in therapy. Now, Denmark participates in the conflicts that the victims come from. I wanted to examine this com-

296 "DIGNITY", accessed 14 January 2019, https://dignity.dk/en/about-dignity/.

plex shift from helping refugees from South American dictatorships to helping refugees from conflict zones where Denmark is involved. On 13 September 2011, the Danish Ministry of Defence was put on trial for the Danish responsibility for a very heavy-handed capture of civilian Sunni Iraqis in 2004 during the "Green Desert" operation. They were surrendered to the Iraqi Shia police, despite the fact that the Danes knew that the Iraqi police used torture.[297] The case has not had much media coverage in Denmark, and the Ministry of Defence tried to bring it to a close.[298]

I chose to focus on Argentina because it gave me the opportunity to observe how the trauma is still unfolding now, forty years later. I chose to focus on Iraq because Denmark was allied with the US during the Iraq War and because I was interested in the focus on women after the publication of the pictures from Abu Ghraib. These choices were, of course, also determined by what was possible: I could go to Argentina to do interviews[299]. I could not go to Iraq because of the ongoing conflict; but I could look at the photos from Abu Ghraib.

The Space

The set design follows the dramatic structure of the piece in a stage triptych, with three rooms appearing one after the other. I wanted to suggest a spatial voyage revealing different layers of torture and therapy. The first part – the interview – is performed downstage in front of a backdrop. The second part – the prison – is performed behind the backdrop, now transparent, and in front of a second backdrop. In the third part the backdrops are torn down, exposing a third small space with yellow walls, as in the Abu Ghraib prison. During the third part the two performers start in the third space and move forward, ending up in front of the audience.

We only use a few props: a Coca-Cola can, a cardboard box, and a pair of green plastic gloves, all referring to objects that appear in the Abu Ghraib pictures. David Nicolas Abas's light design is composed of hard neon light, soft light, and darkness. The blackouts refer to the erasures in Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary* and in the Committee Study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program,

297 "Irak tortursager" ["Iraq torture cases"], accessed 31 October 2018, http://iraktortursager.dk.

298 "Staten brugte 6 millioner kroner på at stoppe torturofres erstatningssag" ["The state spent 6 million Kroner to avoid being sued for compensation by victims of torture"], *Politiken*, 6 November 2016.

299 Further, I lived in Buenos Aires in 2003, 2005, and 2007.

released in 2014.[300] Further, they point to the difficulty of seeing. When reenacting the photos from Abu Ghraib, the sharp neon light comes on. When trying to comprehend reality, the light becomes softer. In the third part the light slowly increases, before finally illuminating the whole space, concluding on the human void – the invisibility of the victim.

Log: Thinking about the Process

> When it's in a book I don't think it'll hurt any more ... exist any more. One of the things writing does is wipe things out. Replace them.
>
> **Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*, 1984**

That's what I am afraid of: that making a performance about torture turns it into something else, something innocent, something to be forgotten, something that does not exist in reality. I am thinking about two different ways of using research: one is really about the meeting between thinking and art, as in *Precarious Life*, and one is about stepping into the half-fictive half-documentary representation of reality as in *This is for her*.

How to Describe the Victim and the Perpetrator

> I am not who I am.
>
> **Iago in William Shakespeare, *Othello*, 1603**

Writing the script was like retelling a narrative over and over again. I changed it so many times that it is difficult to talk about a final text. I felt that I could not find a way to represent the complexity of the theme. Three choices guided my writing: 1) I decided to focus on women; 2) I decided to structure the text around the personal pronouns: I, she, we, they; and 3) I decided to work with very different narrative strategies and tones of language.

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300 "The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program" documents the abuses and mistakes made between late 2001 and early 2009. Accessed 14 January 2019, https://fas.org/irp/congress/2014_rpt/ssci-rdi.pdf. For a discussion of the paradox of why torture still exists today while at the same time being regarded as unethical see Jeremy Wisnewski, *Understanding Torture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

1) I: The victim. I: The prison guard. I: The commander. I: The interrogator.

In the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal there was a strong focus on women, especially the prison guard Lynndie England, who was exposed in the media as a "torture chick" and "trailer trash torturer", and the female general, Janis Karpinski, who was chosen to command fifteen prisons and detention centres in Iraq, including Abu Ghraib.[301] The female interrogators have not had very much exposure in the media, and their actions are mainly known through victim testimonies. They were trained to use their sexuality during interrogation, which was clearly humiliating for the prisoners but perhaps also for the interrogators.[302] This last question highlights my extremely subjective investment and situatedness in this project: I am interested in women in war, how they act and why they act. I presume that female perpetrators find it humiliating to do sexual acts, while I do not presume that male perpetrators find it humiliating to rape women or men. These unspoken presumptions are interesting to examine, not only to be able to see the differences and similarities between male and female participants in war but also as a way to challenge myself (and hopefully the audience) by illuminating the "feminine" side of war.[303]

2) The She. The I. The We

The text carries several voices in order to accommodate the contribution of material from many people. The text in the first part appears as a dramatic text performed as an "I" retelling the story of a victim.

The texts in the second and third part are postdramatic. The different female characters are built up in one scene and are then replaced

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301 There are numerous articles and interviews with Karpinski and England. For England, see, for instance, Emma Brockes, "What Happens in War Happens", The Guardian (3 January 2009), accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/03/abu-ghraib-lynndie-england-interview. Michael Streck and Jan-Christoph Wiechmann, "Lynndie England: Rumsfeld Knew", Stern (17 March 2008), accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/lynndie-england--rumsfeld-knew--3086946.html. For Karpinski, see, for example, Marjorie Cohn, "Janis Karpinski: Exclusive Interview", MWC News (24 August 2005), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0508/S00209.htm. Although subjective, it is also worth reading both England's and Karpinski's autobiographies: Gary Winkler, TORTURED: Lynndie England, Abu Ghraib and the Photographs that Shocked the World (Keyser, WV: Bad Apple Books, 2009). Janis Karpinski with Steven Strasser. One Woman's Army: The Commanding General of Abu Ghraib Tells Her Story (New York: Miramax Books, 2005).

302 For an excellent reflection on the role of women in war and terror see visual artist Coco Fusco's book *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, which combines an art project with a critical commentary about how female sexuality is used as a weapon in the war against suspected Islamic terrorists. Coco Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008).

303 Apparently there is no end to the female complicity in or witnessing of war and torture. In 2018 Donald Trump chose Gina Haspel to be the new Director of the CIA. She is the first woman to hold the post on a permanent basis. In 2002 Haspel reportedly oversaw a "black site" prison in Thailand where terrorism suspects were tortured.

by other voices in the next scene. The two performers, "I" and "You", refer to a "she" who represents the victim or the perpetrator. Here it is the perpetrator that is being represented: *She is born. She goes to kindergarten. Water jets in the back yard in summer.* Here the research about Lynndie England is blended with everyday life observations. In the third part, the therapist speaks from the perspective of a "we" representing both "therapists as a group" and "us" as a society: *Our goal is to reduce her anxiety. She has to become anxious but not too much.*

The "she" in *This is for her* aims to represent "any woman" and thereby mirror *us*.[304] The "I", "she", "we" structure is a way to produce an account that is both singular and collective. For some time I questioned the use of "I" because I wanted to represent a larger group of victims and perpetrators. However, the witness in the performance does not represent one particular witness and cannot be trusted as such. I want to argue that the testimony is an iterative process that displaces the construction of a singular witness: I am not I if I am written. The use of "I", then, is not to believe in a stable subject but rather to insist on the individual narrative as a representation of structural violence. When I use "we" in the third part, it is a direct reference to our shared responsibility both in relation to foreign policy about war participation and in relation to the domestic policy about receiving and helping victims of torture.

Now, it is such a thorny topic to use a universalising "we" and say "*our* shared responsibility". Since I have already addressed in the introduction the "situatedness" (Harraway) of the speaking subject, it is relevant here to ask who is this "we" that I use. I take my chances and suggest that the "we" represents the audience and the performers who – *looking in the mirror* – are both predominantly white and belong to a Western privileged class, and that we are situated in a common responsibility even if we oppose the current foreign and domestic policy. It is a performative gesture, which uses the blindness of the universalising "we" to construct a "Western we", and provocatively leaves the spectator to decide the boundaries of this "we".

In *Precarious Life* the performer subject promised and played with authenticity on stage. In *This is for her* it is clear that I am not the "I" speaking. Would it be more real if the real woman were on stage telling her story? Not necessarily. The "realness" of real people on stage does not mean that we immediately connect with their stories. The

304 In *Precarious Life* I transformed the "I" to a "she" in the end, thus pointing forward to the use of "she" in *This is for her*. The "she" in *Precarious Life* is aimed at distancing myself from the material.

aim of *performing* testimonies is not to perform the reality of a subject but to make the spectator connect with the narrated stories.

3) Poetic Appropriation

As is clear from the text examples, I use different language in the script: sometimes the text sounds like an interview, sometimes it sounds like a performance lecture, and sometimes the text slides into a free-floating narrative:

> We can't believe that this is the girl who had water jets in the back yard. We can't believe that this is the girl who cannot let go of the man she loves. We can't believe that she is the one who wanted to be a storm chaser. We are thinking about a picture of her in a landscape chasing a dark blue storm approaching from the background, firelight as a fallen strip at the bottom of the horizon, tornadoes, thunderstorms, lightning, cloud formations, and we are thinking about all the names she has given to them: Katrina, Amanda, Laura, Dolly, Sally Berta, Hanna … she is all of them … and we are thinking about a landscape beyond death.
>
> *This is for her*[305]

This strategy I would like to call "poetic appropriation". In a biographical description of Lynndie England, I read that she wanted to be a storm chaser. The idea haunted me. Instead of posing in war crime pictures, I saw an image of her taking photos of a meteorological phenomenon. I imagined rain instead of desert, thunder instead of bombs, flooding as a way to wipe out memory. In the War on Terror waterboarding was used as a sanctioned torture method. During the Dirty War in Argentina prisoners were thrown out from airplanes into the Atlantic or the River Plate (Río de la Plata).

Water continued to play an important role in the process. I used it in the script to connect the different parts; I used it together with composer Pelle Skovmand to create a soundscape of rain and thunder; I used it as a video intermezzo between the second and third part;

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305 The names of the seven storms refer to past female hurricane names in the US. The number seven has been chosen to refer to the seven bodies present in the human pyramid in one of the pictures from Abu Ghraib that is used as a key example throughout the second part of the performance. The "man" refers to Charles Graner, England's lover and senior fellow soldier during her stay in the Abu Ghraib prison. Graner was convicted of conspiracy to maltreat detainees and failing to protect detainees from abuse, cruelty, and maltreatment, as well as charges of assault, indecency, and dereliction of duty. On several occasions England has expressed that she did what Graner wanted her to do. See, for instance, Streck and Wiechmann, "Lynndie England: Rumsfeld Knew".

and I used it as a metaphor to describe the movement of pain: *the pain comes suddenly and then withdraws*. However, I also questioned this metaphorical representation of pain turning it into a poetic accessible object. Can pain even be represented?

Narrating Pain

In *A Dialogue on Love* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes that it is more difficult to comprehend the pain of getting breast cancer than the pain she felt when she was suffering from depression in her twenties.[306] In *Exquisite Pain*, Sophie Calle tries to overcome emotional pain by repeating a narrative about the painful moment.[307] In *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes comes out with the somewhat monstrous metaphor that being in love is like being in Auschwitz.[308] Is it possible to compare physical pain with psychological or emotional pain?

Early on in the process I had considered the representation of pain in art. The examples above show how it is problematic to construct a "metaphorical slide" between physical and psychological pain. Whereas Sedgwick refers to the incomprehensibility and difficulties of representing physical pain, Barthes uses the imagination of physical pain to describe the unpleasant feelings of being in love. Of course, Barthes's comparison is absurd: being in love *is not* like being in Auschwitz. However, this statement inspired dramatist Sarah Kane to write *Cleansed*, which has several moments of physical *and* psychological pain, and is situated in an institution described as a hospital run by the sadistic leader Tinker.[309] Kane uses the framework of a physical nightmare but the performance/text also transmits the psychological pain of the characters. (The physical pain of torture clearly differs from the psychological pain of depression or the emotional pain of unrequited love. In torture there is a person intentionally causing another person pain. This might also be the case in love, but the "victim" can just walk away. In depression you cannot walk away, and there is not another person causing the pain, and that makes the difference.) The comparison between different types of pain points to the indefinable nature of pain. The physical pain of torture and the psychological pain that follows are intrinsically connected. Why is it so complex to describe, understand, and measure pain?

306 Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love*.

307 Sophie Calle, *Exquisite Pain* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

308 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

309 *Cleansed* (1998), in Sarah Kane, *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 2001).

In *The Body in Pain* Scarry analyses the difficulty of expressing physical pain and the political and perceptual consequences of this difficulty. Physical pain inflicted by authorities leads to the unmaking of the victim's world. The making of the world, on the other hand, becomes possible through human creation as language, culture, or art. One of her main arguments is that physical pain has no voice.

> Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.[310]

Physical pain cannot be shared. While Scarry is arguably right that the purpose of interrogation is not to elicit necessary information, I would like to question whether the main aim is to deprive the victim of the voice.[311] Torture works by being disseminated in order to make people afraid of what might happen to them.[312] The narrative of torture provokes fear through an identification with the victim. Scarry argues that when you feel intense physical pain your perception of the world disappears. Torture is the structure of unmaking, of making the victim invisible.

The Body in Pain has been both praised and criticised. For instance, Francisca Goldsmith and Konstantin Kolenda highlight the way the study captures the embodied experience of pain, and Edward Said has praised the depth and originality of Scarry's thinking.[313] On the other hand, critics such as Geoffrey Galt Harpham and James Wood point to the inaccuracies and methodological weaknesses of Scarry's study.[314] Harpham argues at length why her methods in *The Body in Pain* cannot be considered academic because, among other things, her text enacts a speculative itinerary from torture to warfare to pain and creation in order to finally reach considerations about the nature of human

310 Scarry, *The Body In Pain*, 4.

311 For more on the purpose of interrogation see Segal, *No Place for Grief*.

312 For more about the effects of torture in society see Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*.

313 Francisca Goldsmith, "Book Review: *The Body in Pain*: The Making and Unmaking of the World", *Library Journal*, 110:14 (1985), 202. Konstantin Kolenda, "Torture and Nuclear War", *The Humanist*, September/October (1988), 47–8. For an overview of the responses to the book see Clifford van Ommen et al., "The Contemporary Making and Unmaking of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*", *Subjectivity* 9 (2016 [special issue: "Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain:* New Perspectives"]), 333–42. Edward Said at the 1999 Modern Language Association convention, quoted in Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "Elaine Scarry and the Dream of Pain", *Salmagundi* 130/131 (2001), 202.

314 James Wood, "Eyes Wide Shut", *The New Republic* (28 February 2000), 27–32. Harpham, "Elaine Scarry and the Dream of Pain".

imagination.[315] The problem is that she resists conducting academic analysis on the variables of torture, pain, and war but uses these categories as unequal concepts to reach her conclusion about aesthetic and restorative properties of material making.[316] While Harpham may be right that the book eschews certain academic methods, it makes a compelling argument of the difficulty of describing pain, building on many sources such as literature and art, medical case histories, documents on torture compiled by Amnesty International, legal transcripts of personal injury trials, and military and strategic writings. Her study addresses the structures of power in a philosophical manner, which for better or worse overlooks the fact that the problem may not be that the victim has no voice but that it is difficult to find a place to recount "the body in pain". These considerations and critical remarks having been taken into account, I will describe how *The Body in Pain* was essential to my artistic research process.

According to Scarry, it is possible to describe psychological pain whereas it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe physical pain: written case stories of victims, medical descriptions, courtroom language, and artistic representations all struggle to describe it.[317] The fact that we often use metaphors to describe pain or use an "as if" structure – "it feels as if", "it is as though" – contributes to the uncertainty of pain: you know when you are in pain but you cannot transfer this knowledge to others by means of language.[318] Psychological suffering, on the other hand, "*does* have referential content, *is* susceptible to verbal objectification, and is so habitually depicted in art that, as Thomas Mann's Settembrini reminds us, there is virtually no piece of literature that is *not* about suffering".[319]

In *This is for her* I question the division between physical and psychological pain. The moment of torture contains both physical and psychological pain and is followed by both psychological and physical pain in the body and memory of the victim. While it may be difficult to describe the physical pain of torture, I would like to suggest that the victim can describe *methods* of torture and thereby evoke "bodily empathy" in the listener, depending on the listener's own understanding of pain. Scarry asserts that the inexpressibility of pain has

315 Harpham, "Elaine Scarry and the Dream of Pain", 205.

316 Harpham, "Elaine Scarry and the Dream of Pain", 215.

317 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 6–11.

318 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 15.

319 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 11.

political consequences, because pain is connected to the exercise of power. The lack of a language for pain leads to a situation where it is not just those who have experienced the pain who express torture: for example, the regimes that torture or people outside the regimes who gather information or intelligence.[320] Ultimately the pain of the victim comes to express a regime's fiction of power.[321] Torture consists of a physical act – the infliction of pain – and a verbal act – the interrogation. The questions are delivered, as though they motivated the cruelty. Physical pain always mimes death, and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution. The victim's pain becomes the perpetrator's power. In *This is for her* I focus on the relation between power and pain, not only at a societal and structural level but also at an individual level, in the relation between victim and perpetrator.

What can we express verbally and materially? Scarry's theoretical framework had a big influence on the concept of the performance. The division between *unmaking* (torture) and *making* (art, culture, language) informed the structure of the performance, where the first two parts about torture represented the unmaking of the victim's world, while the third part, on therapy, represented the making or *re-making* of the victim's world. However, during the process this clear division crumbled apart. The retelling of a testimony in the first part pointed to the unmaking of a victim's world through torture, but at the same time the monologue explored the possibility of bearing witness, of *making* a narrative of the real.

In the second part I looked at the blurred boundaries between victim and perpetrator, which, rather than pointing to the unmaking of the victim's world, pointed to the unmaking of the victim's and also the perpetrator's world: both victim and perpetrator come out of war having suffered trauma, and both victim and perpetrator suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS).[322] And the third part, which aimed to examine the rebuilding of the victim's world, turned out to question whether it is possible to actually reconstruct the victim's trust in the world through therapy. In opposition to Scarry, I wanted to suggest that

320 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 12.

321 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 18.

322 Rachel MacNair gives an insight into the consequences of killing or causing trauma described as perpetrator trauma, also known as perpetration- or participation-induced traumatic stress (PITS), which has the same symptoms as PTDS. See Rachel MacNair, *Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing* (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

the problem of narrating pain is not that the victim has no voice, but rather that the person sitting opposite or the society surrounding the victim, cannot bear to listen, or is not interested in listening, to the victim's description of pain. Further, I wrote a whole scene about the invisibility of the victim.

I was interested in exploring torture as theatre but also in exploring which voices can be created and articulated in a performance space. Does the spectator become a witness when a testimony is performed on stage? Scarry lists different names for rooms of torture, which shows how the illusion of power is exercised: "the production room" in the Philippines, "the cinema room" in South Vietnam, and "the blue lit stage" in Chile.[323] For me these examples point to the theatricality and performativity of torture, both in the torture situation and in the society where torture is carried out.

In the process I looked at the staging of personal narratives in different situations. When I interviewed people, I was looking not only for facts but also for narratives, strategies of retelling a personal story or explaining a field of research. I often got something I was not looking for. I posed a question and got an unexpected answer. As discussed earlier, the interview situation has a theatrical element because of the encounter between two people in a room. In this process I did not know the people I was interviewing. Each time I had the experience that I was meeting both a person and a representative of a group of people: victims, perpetrators, therapists, anthropologists, and political activists. I met a person and a possible character. In March 2017 I travelled to Argentina to research torture. During the *Guerra Sucia* – the Dirty War – a period of state terrorism lasting from 1974 to 1983, the country was a dictatorship and more than thirty thousand people were tortured and disappeared.[324]

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323 For a long time I collected "names" of torture regimes: the Reign of Terror (France), the Khmer Rouge Regime (Cambodia), the Dirty War (Argentina), etc. The names were to be written on pieces of cardboard as part of the set design, but the idea was given up during the rehearsal process.

324 Many Argentinians do not like to refer to that period as the Dirty War. The term "Dirty War" was used by the military junta, which claimed that a war was necessary to maintain social order and eradicate political opponents, although this war included torture, rape, and killings. The term has been questioned by human rights NGOs because it suggests that a civil war was going on, justifying the killings. Most left-wing, anti-dictatorship Argentinians who live with the aftermath and organisations such as the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo) consider the term to have been coined outside the country and that it serves to cover up the state terrorism that took place during the dictatorship. When I use it, I do so to refer critically to a period that was named Dirty War by the authorities. Within a performance and theatre context there are other critical accounts that use the term as a point of reference. For instance, theatre scholar Diana Taylor looks at the Dirty War in order to analyse how national identity is shaped, gendered, and contested through spectacle and spectatorship. See Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

Log: Interviews in Argentina

Before reading about torture, before going to Argentina, I speak with H. He has escaped from the dust, the sand, the dark, over the mountains, to the big city. He has been tortured. He has been in jail. He lives with it every day. When he talks about it, his language dissolves. Memory falls forward in fragments, searches backwards, repeats itself. Does memory work as a non-chronological stream of consciousness? Or is it a strategy to control the narrative?

In Argentina we interview F.[325] He is the son of one of the first people to disappear. He talks a lot. He does not allow us to interfere. He says that he has thought about the dramaturgy of the interview, and he wants to save the best to the end. He says that the loss of his father has taken his life away from him.

We drive out of Buenos Aires to interview A and B. When we arrive, A says that unfortunately B cannot be present because she had to go for a massage. We sit in the kitchen. We talk about activism and theatre as political resistance. At one point the phone rings. Someone in another room answers it. A says that perhaps B has been present in the house the whole time.

Long journey to the other side of the city. The woman we are going to meet does not open the door. Call her daughter. Says that her mother is on her way. Wait in the street. Call the daughter again. Says the same thing. Wait in the street. After two hours, give up. She can't talk about it.

C was a member of one of the militant groups, *montoneros*, during the dictatorship. He was never arrested. He talks, wipes the tears away, talks again. He jumps between the past, the present, and the future. We lose track. The murder of a president. The massacre of sixty-four prisoners. Exile, first in Brazil, then in the US. He says he was a cleaner for Nancy Reagan. We know that we do not know his story.

The taxi driver says he did military service during the dictatorship. He was driving the dictator. Am I sitting in a taxi with Videla's chauffeur? He had privileges. He was allowed to let his hair grow and wear whatever he wanted. One night he met a group of soldiers in the street. He showed his ID and said: "No me toques el pelo." "Don't touch my hair." He seems sympathetic.

S was tortured for thirteen months. Her husband disappeared. She tried to commit suicide. She doesn't cry. She holds back. She is what she is. She *is* the testimony.

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325 Producer René Kruse, assistant Agustina Barzola Würth, and myself. Interviews with Berta Mirabella, Carlos Gavarotto, Felipe Vallese, and Susana Bogey conducted 6–20 March 2017.

Figure 19, Susana Bogey, Felipe Vallese, and Berta Mirabella in Buenos Aires, March 2017.

Figure 20, Carlos Gavarotto in Buenos Aires, March 2017.

Figure 21, from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance. © Søren Meisner.

What is a Testimony?

The first part of *This is for her* is staged as the retelling of an interview with a torture victim. Really it is a monologue containing several interviews, which have been edited into one narrative. Many voices are speaking in the narration. Two questions have to be asked. First: can the retelling of an interview on stage be considered a testimony? Second: can it even be defined as a retelling when the narration consists of several interviews?

Shoshana Felman proposes that *writing* literature and *reading* literary texts can be understood as bearing witness.[326] Reading Freud, Celan, and Camus, among others, she demonstrates how bearing witness can be performed through literary, clinical, historical, and poetic testimonies. I want to reflect here on the complex structure of bearing witness in performance. It is important to note that I read *Testimony* after the making of the performance and therefore the following is to be read as an after-reflection, a way to reflect and understand what I did in the artistic process.

In my research process I interviewed people who testified to their memories of the past. In the writing and performance of the interviews, I performed an act of bearing witness to their testimonies. If

326 An example is Elias Canetti's book *Kafka's Other Trial* (1967), which can be understood as a testimony. Kafka's letters to his fiancée, Felice, represent a textual testimony of life, and Canetti's reading of Kafka makes him a witness to Kafka. Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 2.

we assume that the performance is a testimony, we could say that the spectators are witnessing a three-layered testimony: 1) the testimony of the interviews; 2) the written text testifying to different testimonies; and 3) the performance testifying to the written text. Or, to put it another way, the interviews are testimonies; the script testifies to the interviews, and the audience witnesses the performance of the script. Watching a performance is an act of bearing witness.

Felman writes that testimony has become a crucial mode of our relation to the traumas of contemporary history. In testimony language is in process, there is no conclusion, no self-transparency of knowledge. Testimony is a discursive practice, a performative speech act in opposition to the common definition of testimony as a formal written or spoken statement, an evidence or proof of something. Reading Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Felman writes that both psychoanalysis and literature can be "considered *events of speech*" and their testimony can be "understood as a mode of *truth's realization* beyond what is available as statement".[327]

Freud invents the psychoanalytic dialogue in which the doctor's testimony resonates with the patient's testimony, meaning that it takes two to witness the unconscious. You can give testimony to something you have not experienced yourself; the narrated dream, derived from reality, but enacted in fantasy. Following this thought, I would like to suggest that the interview that the artist carries out with the victim is a performative speech act in which the victim's testimony resonates with the artist's testimony enacting itself in the performance. I do not consider the performance to be therapy, but I do think that a truth realisation takes place in the experience of the spectator.[328]

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327 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 2.

328 It is important to note that theatre methods have been used in therapy: for instance, in drama therapy and psychodrama in which theatre techniques are used to investigate and gain insight into the patients' lives and strengthen their mental health. Theatre and performance scholar Fintan Walsh has written about the links between theatre and therapy when it comes to actor training, theatre in therapeutic contexts, and contemporary theatre and performance. See Fintan Walsh, *Theatre and Therapy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). When living in Argentina, I noticed that theatre and therapy were closely connected both in drama therapy and in staged theatre. Dramatist and director Daniel Veronese is an example of an artist who has examined therapy in his pieces. On trauma and performance in Argentina, see Diego Benegas, "'If There's No Justice …': Trauma and Identity in Post-Dictatorship Argentina", *Performance Research* 16 (2011), 20–30. Also worthy of mention is Brazilian theatre-maker, theorist, and activist Augusto Boal, who founded the Theatre of the Oppressed, originally used as a theatrical method in radical left movements. A key element of Boal's method is that it seeks to transform audiences into active participants in the theatrical experience. In the book *Rainbow of Desire* Boal describes how theatre has a therapeutic ability to free individuals and change lives. Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge, 1995).

How to Retell a Testimony

> When you are tortured, you tell all kinds of stories. When you arrive at another country or get back from war, you try to tell the right story. Therapy is an opening. You can say what you are ashamed of. What you did wrong. But little by little you try to create a story again. A story that works for you.
>
> *This is for her*

Felman's book *Testimony* is written with the psychiatrist Dori Laub, who elaborates on the relationship between the victim as witness of trauma and the therapist as listener and witness of the victim's testimony. During the listening, the "knowing" or "record" of the event is born and the therapist becomes a co-owner of the traumatic event. Testimony in therapy represents a space where the victim can recover her identity.[329] An empathic listener can bear witness to the story of the survivor and thereby affirm that the event took place. The act of telling can be traumatising if the survivor relives the event, but therapy helps by re-externalising the event and constructing a narrative.[330] Laub writes:

> The victim's narrative – the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma – does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence.[331]

According to Laub, the Holocaust was taking place with no witnesses, not only because of the ignorance of the bystanders but also because the victims and the perpetrators were inside the event and could only

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329 There have been several attempts to use "testimony therapy" as a form of treatment for traumatised victims of organised violence such as war or torture. The patients tell their life stories, including the traumatic experiences. The testimony is reflected in a written document that can be read to family and friends or sent to a historical archive. When victims give testimony to the torture to which they have been subjected, the trauma story can be given a meaning and be reframed. See Inger Agger and Søren Buus Jensen, "Testimony as Ritual and Evidence in Psychotherapy for Political Refugees", *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3 (1990), 115–30. Of the people I interviewed, only Husseini (a political refugee in Denmark) had been through therapeutic treatment at DIGNITY. The survivors in Argentina had not been offered therapy, and the trials against perpetrators of the dictatorship are still going on.

330 Conducting the interviews, I was aware that I had no therapeutic training. I therefore created an open framework with the intention of making the interviewee decide how they wanted to talk and what they wanted to say. Listening to the recordings, I became aware that I asked, "Should we stop here?" several times, even though the interviewee clearly wanted to continue. I was afraid of doing "wrong", of listening in a "wrong" way.

331 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 57.

witness the event from within.[332] Professor of English and Jewish Studies Sandor Goodhart has convincingly criticised this argument, suggesting that even if there was a world-historical collective amnesia, "that would still not establish that the evidence for the trauma is lacking".[333] He argues that the Holocaust *is* witnessable and recorded in many variations, such as Adam Czerniakow's diaries or the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, which Laub writes about. This argument seems reasonable: the bystanders may have ignored the atrocities, and the perpetrators and victims may have been so affected that they could not testify, but there are records of the Holocaust. Thus, Laub's idea of "the impossible victim" can be questioned from a theoretical point of view but I found it very interesting to pursue it as part of my artistic research.

I was interested in Laub's description of the relationship between survivor and therapist and what I would call the "becoming real" of the traumatic event in therapy. This description may tell us something about the relationship between the artist and the interviewee and between the audience and the performed representation of testimony. Laub describes three levels of witnessing: being a witness to oneself, being witness to the testimonies of others, and being witness to the process of witnessing itself.[334] I find it useful to navigate between these levels in relation to *This is for her*. I have no autobiographical experience of being a survivor, but I have interviewed survivors, and in this writing I bear witness to the process of witnessing. In the performance I displace my role as a listener to the role of a narrator. Laub suggests that the Video Archive represents a testimonial process close to the psychoanalytic process. There is an interviewer and a survivor, and there is also the audience of the archive. If the archive can be seen as a mode of re-externalisation, I think that we might also consider the artistic representation of trauma as a mode of re-externalisation. In the moment of the interview, the survivor meets a listener, and in the future artistic representation there will be a second listener: an audience.

I chose to retell the interviews as a monologue on stage. There are several problems in understanding the retelling I perform as a testimony. First, the text is edited and contains fictive elements and

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332 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 81. For more on the crisis of witnessing the Holocaust see Claudia Welz, "Trauma, Memory, Testimony: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Ethical Perspectives", *Jewish Studies in the Nordic Countries Today* 27 (2016), 104–33.

333 Sandor Goodhart, "The Witness of Trauma: A Review Essay", *Modern Judaism* 12:2 (1992), 208.

334 Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 75.

different voices. Second, there is a temporal deferral between the now of the performance, the now of the testimony and the now of the event – a deferral that reinforces the complex structure of memory. And third, even though I tried not to do much, I did perform the textual testimony of the interviews: I tried to reproduce the gestures of the interviewees, repeat their long silences, their sudden broken language, and outbreaks of emotion before continuing the account. Taking these objections into consideration, I want to underline the fact that bearing witness is a performative act in the interview, in the written text, and in the performance. I thought of reenacting one of the interviews – a radical five-hour solution – but I chose to represent different voices. The retelling is my testimony of the interviews. It is not a retelling with documentary reference to reality but rather a retelling of researched and reflected material framing and doubling a lived reality.[335]

The artistic representation of trauma does not have to bear witness to historical truth. The aim is, rather, to represent other facets of trauma, the victim's memory, and relate it to the historical context. During the process I came to terms with the fact that I did not always trust the people I interviewed. Did H escape in this impossible way? Did the taxi driver really work for the dictator Videla? Did C not participate more in the resistance, and did he really work for Nancy Reagan when he was in exile? These incredible events might be true – historical coincidences – or they might be slips of memory. Memory is subjective, and we cannot produce a straightforward narrative of the past. The survivors are now a different age from when the events took place: they know more, and they feel differently, all of which affects the testimony. The testimony changes over time not only because memory is subjective but also because the person changes. In the performance I decided that a testimony does not have to be accurate, unless it was part of a historical narrative or court proceedings. I turned the different testimonies into one voice. I turned the survivors into a female representative. I added philosophical and poetic details to the account. All of this adds up to a momentary "performative truth" on stage.

Felman and Laub allow for the possibility of narrating the atrocities, of bearing witness, both as a victim and as a listener, a reader,

335 For more on how we may understand the "documentary reference to reality" see Stella Bruzzi's article on the use of documentary images in legal procedures: "Narrative, 'Evidence Vérité,' and the Different Truths of the Modern Trial Documentary", in Erika Balsom and Hilga Peleg (eds.), *Documentary across Disciplines* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2016), 252–79.

or a writer. It may not be possible to share the pain of the victim, as Scarry writes, but we may testify to the victim's testimony – even if it is through an artistic representation. Our reaction to the representation of testimonies is part of bearing witness.

Torture, Therapy, and Time

> She is sitting. She is crying, she is smiling. In the prison cell, in the interrogation room, in the torture chamber, in the interview room for asylum seekers, and now, years later, in the therapy room.
>
> *This is for her*

The third part of the performance focuses on the therapy that soldiers and victims of torture receive after the event, when they return home from war or are granted asylum in Denmark. We may not understand the momentary event of torture, but we can understand the durational pain of the victims and their experience of depression, anxiety, and isolation. In the performance I focused on the therapy that the victims of torture receive rather than the therapy that the soldiers receive.[336] At present, 30 per cent of all refugees have been subjected to torture.[337] DIGNITY has an interdisciplinary approach to the treatment of torture: physiotherapists, psychologists, and social workers collaborate to facilitate the best treatment for the victims. In addition, the psychologist may use different methods, depending on the individual, such as somatic experiencing, cognitive therapy, psycho-education, narrative therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, or prolonged exposure therapy.[338] The latter suggests that the victim has to re-experience the traumatic event through remembering it rather than avoiding it.[339]

336 I did not have the opportunity to interview soldiers or therapists treating soldiers. However, I tried to make the third part represent a victim who could both be the victim of torture and the soldier as a victim of war.

337 "DIGNITY", accessed 14 January 2019, https://dignity.dk/en/dignitys-work/facts-about-torture/.

338 These are the methods that therapists Lone Jacobsen and Ala Goldblum Elczewska have used.

339 Prolonged exposure therapy was developed by Edna B. Foa to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. See Edna B. Foa et al., *Emotional Processing of Traumatic Experiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The memory does not disappear, but the victim can learn to live with it as something that took place in the past. As José Quiroga and Roger Gurr have argued, the treatment is never finished.[340]

Thinking with Harun Farocki's video installation *Serious Games I–IV*

Does therapy mark torture as an event in the past? In a series of video installations, *Serious Games I–IV* (2009–10) film director and artist Harun Farocki reflects on the use of virtual realities and games in the recruiting, training, and therapy of soldiers.[341] In the first episode, *Serious Games I: Watson is Down*, we follow American soldiers practising going to war in a computer game that shows a simulated version of Afghanistan. The sun is shining from the same spot as in the real country. The same light. The same time. The same sunset. Sunrise. In *Serious Games IV: A Sun without Shadow* we follow American soldiers who practise returning home from war. In a commentary Farocki writes that the pictures used for the preparation of war and the pictures used for war-veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are very similar: "But there is a difference: The program for commemorating traumatic experiences is somewhat cheaper. Nothing and no-one casts a shadow here."[342] Farocki makes the unpleasant observation that the preparation for war and the treatment of war mirror each other – although care for war veterans is cheaper. It goes without saying that Farocki's work is not a comprehensive description of the treatment of soldiers. Within an American context, as depicted in *Serious Games*, war veterans receive different types of treatment, among them prolonged exposure therapy (PE), cognitive processing therapy (CPT), and eye-movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR).[343]

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340 José Quiroga and Roger Gurr, "Approaches to Torture Rehabilitation: A Desk Study Covering Effects, Cost Effectiveness, Participation, and Sustainability", Copenhagen: International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims IRCT), *Torture* 1 (2001), 1–35. When I spoke to Lone Jacobsen, she pointed to a complex dilemma in the treatment of torture. Officially, the aim of therapy is to *cure* the survivors, but according to Jacobsen, a legitimate goal is that the survivors do not get worse, that they do not become mentally imbalanced or commit suicide, and that they can be parents without worrying that they will pass the anxiety on to their children.

341 Harun Farocki, *Serious Games I: Watson is Down* (2010), *Serious Games II: Three Dead* (2010), *Serious Games III: Immersion* (2009), *Serious Games IV: A Sun without Shadow* (2010).

342 *Serious Games IV: A Sun without Shadow*, accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.harunfarocki.de/installations/2010s/2010/serious-games-iv-a-sun-without-shadow.html.

343 "National Center for PTSD", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/tx_basics.asp.

Figure 22, Harun Farocki, from *Serious Games I: Watson is Down*, 2010. Video installation. © Harun Farocki.

Figure 23, Harun Farocki, from *Serious Games IV: A Sun without Shadow*, 2010. Video installation. © Harun Farocki.

So when I try here to think using Farocki's work, I am aware that I am not conducting research in an academic sense. I am accumulating ideas for a research-based performance and not for a paper on therapy. After reading about therapy from a psychoanalytic perspective I did not find that I had anything to add other than: please read these articles. After watching *Serious Games I–IV* I found that I could add something by thinking through the artwork and that this thinking was indeed research for a future performance (most academics will not be happy here).

Farocki's work made me reflect on the treatment of torture victims versus the treatment of war veterans: soldiers are asked to reenact traumatic battlefield events while victims of torture are asked to retell traumatic torture situations. These strategies seem to maintain the soldiers and the victims of torture in their identities: the soldiers as the ones acting, the victims as the ones receiving.[344] The aim of reenactment and retelling in therapy is to isolate the event, to repeat it, and to transform it into a memory that does not appear again and again in everyday life. The challenge is that everyday objects appear as props in the performance of war and torture. Here I use theatre language (props, performance) in order to frame the theatricality of torture, well aware that this comparison may seem offensive. In *This is for her* I wanted to show how the act of torture demonises well-known things from the past and enacts them in the present, something that applies both to the victim and to the perpetrator: "They placed a Coca-Cola can in the room. Every time she sees a Coca-Cola she is back." (*This is for her*).

What is the beginning and ending of pain? The complex temporality of torture plays out on several levels: torture leaves a physical memory in the body;[345] torture is extended through the victim's memory of the past; and the victim's fear of being tortured again anticipates a future moment of torture in the imagination of the victim. Reenacting and retelling trauma may reduce the survivor's anxiety by witnessing the event with a temporal deferral. The survivor has to touch anxiety without becoming too anxious. Now, the question is how we as spectators, listeners, and witnesses relate to the representation of

344 It is difficult to make a clear distinction between victim and perpetrator. At DIGNITY victims of torture cannot get treatment if they have been a perpetrator, even if this was part of the torture. Likewise, soldiers and victims of torture are not treated in the same place even though the soldiers have been tortured.

345 An example is *falanga* – beating the soles of the feet – which damages the nerves in the feet forever. Every time you take a step there is pain. You are reminded of the torture for the rest of your life.

pain. Perhaps we can touch the unbearable, but we cannot grasp it if it becomes too detailed. To examine this, I will read another artwork, which captures the torture machine.

Thinking with Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony"

At the end of Kafka's short story "In the Penal Colony" (1919) the European research traveller sits in a boat leaving the island that he has just visited. Two of the other characters, the soldier and the condemned prisoner, have run after him trying to jump on board but are prevented by the traveller. Why? Is it because he does not want to bring home memories, anything or anybody, from the penal colony? Or is it because he is judging them as inferior, not suitable to assimilate into his society?

Before leaving, the traveller has been shown a torture and execution apparatus that will kill the condemned prisoner by carving the sentence on his skin within twelve hours. The officer responsible for the machine explains that the prisoner will attain redemption before dying. While listening, the traveller considers whether to obstruct the execution: "intervening in other people's affairs is always fraught with risks", he argues to himself, and he is travelling to see things, and not to interfere with foreign notions of justice.[346] However, he is convinced that the procedure is unjust and inhumane. So he tells the officer that he will not support the continuous use of the machine when meeting the new reformist commandant. The officer is disappointed and decides to use the machine a last time carving the sentence "Be just!" on his own skin. Unfortunately, the device breaks down. It kills the officer before he achieves redemption.

Reading "In the Penal Colony", I came to think of my role as an *artist* research traveller.[347] It also confronted me with a disturbing double mirror image of our present reality: 1) the European and US military presence in conflict zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan; and 2) The current migration crisis, where refugees try to enter Europe by boat as asylum seekers. The traveller witnesses the use of torture in

346 Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony", *Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 162.

347 Here we may think of Hal Foster's critique of what he calls "the artist as ethnographer". The scenario is this: an artist is flown in to engage a chosen community, but there is not enough time or money to actually interact with the community, there is no critique of the relationship between participant and observer, and the community is not affected. Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" in *The Return of the Real: The Avantgarde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 302–9.

a foreign penal colony.[348] One could argue that "we" – representing the Western military power – perform the same gesture now, adding a complex layer of performing torture ourselves: *We* visit foreign regions, *we* condemn the use of torture in previous dictatorships, *we* sanction our own use of torture in the War on Terror, and later *we* try to reject the victims when they try to jump on board.[349] The paradox is that it is exactly the condemnation of violent behaviour in foreign regions that is used to legitimise the use of violent methods in the very same places.[350] Kafka illustrates the way the exercise of power works through torture. The officer explains: "My basis for deciding is this: guilt is always beyond doubt."[351] And although the traveller is not satisfied with this explanation, he reminds himself that "this was a penal colony, certain rules obtained, and military discipline evidently had to be kept tight".[352] Here, torture is legitimised through the conditions of the place. In the War on Terror torture is legitimised through a "state of emergency" that overrules international torture conventions.

Kafka's story points to the recurring system of torture: that it is difficult, if not impossible, to escape the torture machine. In the end, the condemned smile incessantly when realising that it is now the officer who is going to be judged. The system of power is not destroyed but rather turned around. The machine writes the sentence on the condemned, just as torture marks the body of the victim. The question is whether torture writes the future body of the victim, whether the marked body is a written body, whether torture can be seen as a punctual event and therapy as a scripted retelling of that event. These

348 The research traveller fills out the privileged position of an observer who does not have to interfere. This is how he can be judging the system while at the same time being seduced by the detailed description of the machine. The description of the machine has inspired several artists. See, for instance, dramatist Heiner Müller's text "In der Strafkolonie nach Franz Kafka", *Werke 2: Die Prosa* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 132–5, and visual artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's installation *The Killing Machine* (2007), accessed 19 January 2019, https://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/inst/killing_machine.html.

349 In 2003 the US and its allies invaded Iraq. The operation was called Operation Iraqi Freedom. The "Torture Memos", released in 2006, showed that the US Department of Justice, shortly before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, had authorised "enhanced interrogation techniques" and exemption from international humanitarian laws in the US secret prisons in Afghanistan, and Iraq. In December 2014, 525 pages of the 6,000-page report on the CIA's use of various forms of torture ("enhanced interrogation techniques") on detainees between 2001 and 2006 during the War on Terror were released. The rest is classified. See "The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program".

350 As Donatella Di Cesare writes in *Tortur*, the wide international support for the convention on the use of torture has not diminished its use: quite the contrary. Donatella Di Cesare, *Tortur* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Vandkunsten, 2017), 46–8.

351 Kafka, "In the Penal Colony", 155.

352 Kafka, "In the Penal Colony", 156.

questions imply that Kafka's written body – the body of the condemned, whose written sentence is also his execution – can be seen as an image of the victim whose body is trapped in the signature of torture. Thus, the torture moment produces a written body, which is then retold as a script in therapy. (Addition: scripts can be changed.)

Fear of Knowing/Fear of the Unknown/The Fear of Being Touched/Touching Fear

> There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to see what is reaching towards him, and to be able to recognize or at least classify it.
>
> **Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 1960**

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions,* Sara Ahmed discusses the performativity of fear in contemporary politics. In an almost uncanny mirroring of Canetti she identifies the temporality of fear based on a reading of Frantz Fanon's 1952 book *Black Skins, White Masks*:

> Fear's relation to the object has an important temporal dimension: we fear an object that approaches us. Fear, like pain, is felt as an unpleasant form of intensity. But while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasantness of fear also relates to the future. Fear involves an anticipation of hurt or injury. Fear projects us from the present into the future.[353]

Ahmed demonstrates how fear does not disappear; when the object passes by, it increases in intensity: "If fear had an object, then fear could be contained by the object."[354] Fear and narratives of crises work to secure social norms and forms of the collective.[355]

Thinking along the same lines as Ahmed, I want to argue that torture is a way to create and sustain fear on an individual and societal level both in countries where torture is performed as a form of state power and in countries that sanction the use of torture in the War on Terror. Fear is used to control a population. If political activity is punished by torture, it is easier not to get involved. If there is a risk of terrorism, Western societies reconsider the use of torture. If a victim

353 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 65.

354 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 65.

355 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 71.

of torture is granted asylum, he or she might bring along the fear of a future pain and expose it in therapy.[356]

It is difficult to identify who the terrorist is, so we try to produce one through torture.[357] Since 9/11 the "ticking time bomb scenario" has been used as an argument to sanction the use of terror.[358] When non-sanctioned torture is performed, on the other hand, we often try to find a scapegoat. In the script, I chose to write a rather direct (perhaps too direct) text about this problem:

> Because we need a face that can take the blame. We need a person who can cover the errors in the system. We need a picture of her in a prison, which she cannot leave, with bombs falling outside and neon lights shining inside, she's dragging a naked prisoner behind her, who's bleeding and gasping for breath, Abu, Khalid, Nawaf, Mohamed, Marwan, Ziad, Hani, she goes over the limit of what is humane, because it's her, and not the system, that is sick.
>
> *This is for her*[359]

Referring back to Ahmed's theoretical analyses of fear and Kafka's literary dissection of the visitor, I want to question how fear plays out

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356 Interestingly one of the characters in Milo Rau's/IIPM's performance *Empire* (2016) claims that interrogation served as a form of therapy for him. See "Empire", accessed 14 January 2019, http://international-institute.de/en/empire-2/. We must presume that this interrogation did not contain hard physical or psychological torture.

357 We do not have a coherent understanding of torture. There is a big difference in how we perceive the use of torture in non-Western dictatorships and how we perceive our own involvement in torture of suspected terrorists. In a public talk between the anthropologist Lotte Buch Segal and myself, she explained that the definition of torture in Palestine is connected not only to physical violence but also to the humiliation of imprisonment or occupation as being at a checkpoint. The talk took place on 23 October 2017, but it is not documented. This observation does not undermine the severity of torture but points to the discrepancy between the definition of torture and the victim's experience of it. This dilemma plays out in the investigation of the Abu Ghraib photos, where some were identified as "torture" and some were identified as "Standard Operating Procedure", following the logic that humiliation is not torture and therefore not evidence for prosecution. For more on this topic see Errol Morris's excellent documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). Further, the US government sanctioned torture methods by referring to them as "enhanced interrogation".

358 "The ticking bomb scenario can be formulated as follows: suppose that a perpetrator of an imminent terrorist attack, that will kill many people, is in the hands of the authorities and that he will disclose the information needed to prevent the attack only if he is tortured. Should he be tortured?" Definition taken from "Defusing the Ticking Bomb Scenario: Why We Must Say No to Torture, Always", *Association for the Prevention of Torture* (2007), 1. Accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.apt.ch/content/files_res/tickingbombscenario.pdf. For a thorough analysis of the ethical implications of torture related to the ticking bomb scenario see Bob Brecher, *Torture and the Ticking Bomb* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

359 The names refer to six of the hijackers in the 11 September attacks and Abu Zubayda, a Saudi Arabian citizen currently held by the US in the Guantanamo camp. Zubayda was accused of serving as a high-ranking member of Al-Qaeda and was subjected to numerous torture techniques. In 2009 the US government stated that they did not contend that Zubayda had any involvement with the 9/11 attacks or that he had even been a member of Al-Qaeda. See *Zayn al Abidin Muhammad Husayn v. Robert Gates*, Respondent's Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Opposition to Petitioner's Motion for Discover and Petitioner's Motion for Sanctions Civil Action No. 08-cv-1360 (RWR) (September 2009), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.dcoxfiles.com/GovtOppAZTruthout.pdf.

in our Western society: are we afraid of confronting our complicity in the execution of torture and of recognising the conflicted identity of the victim? Is there a politics of repressing knowledge? Are we colonising victims of torture to fit our society while also colonising their home countries? Do we use therapy to cover up our own feeling of guilt? And does therapy perform an economic and affective role in the performance of emotions in contemporary politics?

In the final text of the performance I focus on the invisibility of the victim seen from the perspective of a collective "we". Again I risk using a universalising "we" proposing that it is difficult for "us" who are non-victims and non-refugees to see the victims. My use of invisibility is a clear reference to the novel *Invisible Man* (1952), by Ralph

Figure 24 from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance.
© Søren Meisner.

Ellison, in which the white people simply do not see the black protagonist. While not invisible through colour, I do imagine the victims of torture isolated in their rooms lit by endless memory light bulbs, as in Jeff Wall's photo *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue* (1999). Referring back to Scarry, I would like to end this section by proposing that art and therapy have the possibility of making visible what is not visible. The task is not to give answers but continuously to ask ourselves whether we even want to change anything or ourselves, whether we even want to understand anything or ourselves.

Torture, Therapy, and Testimony in *This is for her*

In this chapter I have reflected on how to represent torture, therapy, and testimony on stage. The torture moment is a punctual event that anticipates the future. When it is retold in therapy or art, we might talk about a scripted retelling of that event, which repeats and transforms the event again and again. In a performance the performer enacts a scripted version of the past or of the *past past*: the retelling of an interview with a survivor retelling the event of the past. Further, the retelling of a script already anticipates a possible repetition in the future. Retelling takes place between past, present, and future and places the spectators in a position where they are witnessing the testimony of an event that took place and will take place again. I will pursue this doubling of time in the next chapter, which examines how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib. The performance of the script contains some narratives and excludes others. A testimony is both a postulate and a forensic tool to gain knowledge of the event. In the performance I use retelling to reflect on the durational affect and effect of torture. The title *This is for her* is a way to insist on the individual narrative and the singular event. The personal is political.[360]

Next spread:
Figure 25, video still from projection from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance.
© Søren Meisner.

360 Although this echoes the slogan "The personal is political", also sometimes given as "The private is political", used by the second-wave feminism from the late 1960s to point to the connections between the personal and the political, I use it here to think about the responsibility not only at a state level but also at an individual level. In *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt distinguishes between a private sphere and a public political sphere. This distinction served at the time as a powerful argument to turn the public sphere into a visible political space. Subsequently Arendt's argument has been criticised for not taking into account the fact that the public space is a controlled space and that some groups might be excluded. Here I am interested in Arendt's distinction as far as the performance space could be said to establish the political both on a public and on a personal level: the theatre is public, and the spectator's response to the performance is personal. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

Figure 26, sketches from *I Love You You Love Me*, 2015. Staged reading. © Søren Meisner.

5.

Return and Repetition: Reenacting Scenes of Violence

> They are asked to come out of the rooms into the corridor. They are asked to undress and lie on top of each other in a pyramid. They are asked to remain still. The man and the woman think it is practical: there are seven of them and it's such an enclosed area and it'll keep them together and contained because they have to concentrate on staying up on the pyramid instead of doing something to the man and the woman. Later the woman says: if the media hadn't exposed the pictures to that extent, then thousands of lives would have been saved. Yeah, I took the photos but I didn't make it worldwide.
>
> *This is for her*[361]

Can a text reenact an image?

In this chapter I think about how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib, by far the most challenging part of the performance as research process. Before starting this process, I believed in the possibility of reenacting photos in order to represent the depicted torture. But I did not know how to make the reenactments work as markers of past events and records in their own right. In the studio I tried to repeat the photos with real bodies. I tried to show the physical photos. And I tried to discuss the context and consequences of the photos. I kept having a feeling that it did not work. Why not? My process became geared to answering that question.

Here I will introduce the reader to my first research before relating

361 The prisoners were, of course, "told" to come out of their "cells". When I write that they were "asked" to come out of their "rooms", I am playing with how England described the situation depicted in the photo of the human pyramid as something that just happened: "At the time I thought, I love this man [Graner], I trust this man with my life, okay, then he's saying, well, there's seven of them and it's such an enclosed area […]". The whole text builds on two quotes by England; see Streck and Wiechmann, "Lynndie England: Rumsfeld Knew".

that work to critical theories of representation and reenactment of the photos from Abu Ghraib. The chapter is structured around three lines of thought: 1) work notes and a writing excerpts from *This is for her*; 2) discussion of critical theories; 3) analysis of an artwork that uses reenactment. My aim is to lead the reader through my research process and demonstrate how different acts of research constantly interchange. I will demonstrate how I use theory in the artistic research. The main question is how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib. Reading Susan Sontag and Judith Butler, I reflect on photography and representation.[362] I analyse Candice Breitz's video installation *Love Story* (2016) to look at different strategies of reenacting and retelling narratives of flight. Although not a performance, it uses performative strategies to engage with the spectator. After the analyses I turn to Rebecca Schneider's reading of the photos as scriptive entities that happen again and again as we look at them.[363] Finally, I return to my own work suggesting how to reenact – or not – the photos from Abu Ghraib.

Background: Photos from Abu Ghraib

In April 2004 CBS News published the Abu Ghraib photos, showing a series of human rights violations committed by personnel of the United States Army and the CIA in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The violations included physical and sexual abuse, torture, rape, sodomy, and murder. The Bush administration avoided using the word "torture" and consequently referred to the actions as "abuse" or "humiliation". However, subsequent investigations stated that the torture at Abu Ghraib did not occur as isolated incidents but happened in several US detention centres in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay.[364]

The photos from Abu Ghraib and the revelations about Guantanamo made it clear that torture was being used in the so-called "War on Terror".[365] In some of the photos the faces of the victims are covered to protect their identity. But the faces of the perpetrators are visible, smiling while striking triumphant postures, apparently proud

362 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others", *New York Times* (23 May 2004), 6–24. Judith Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag", in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 63–100.

363 Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*.

364 See "The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program".

365 The photos from Abu Ghraib are, of course, not the only disturbing images emerging from the War on Terror. For more about the persistent role of verbal and visual images and the political effects of the War on Terror see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

of their brutal treatment of detainees. The photos are not only emotionally disturbing; they also show the failure of a system. How could this happen? Had it happened before, and is it still happening? Are the photos showing "the worst" or "the best" of what took place in the prison?[366] The photos offer proof that this happened, but how do we look at them, how do we understand them, and do they make us react? These were important questions for me that triggered my research process. I did not – I *do* not – understand these pictures, I was interested in discussing them not in, for instance, a performance lecture but to expose them in a different frame, to reenact them in order to be able to see them again.

Reenactment: A Few Examples

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, reenactments are used in different artistic and real-life contexts. In a Google search "historical reenactments" will show up first, demonstrating how popular this genre of staging historical events has become. In a performance context several artists have reenacted performances by other performance artists. With *Seven Easy Pieces* (Guggenheim, 2005), Marina Abramović committed herself to recreating or reinterpreting seven iconic performance works in order to archive them for the future.[367] Another example is choreographer Mette Ingvartsen, who in the performance *69 Positions* (2014) reenacts Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964).[368] She not only *does* it; she also *tells* it. She performs it through language. A double form of documentation. In a documentary context, films use reenactments of historical events to reflect on conflicts and crisis. In the documentary movie *The Act of Killing* (2012), Joshua Oppenheimer follows former Indonesian death-squad leaders as they reenact their mass-killings in different cinematic genres, including *film noir*, musical, and action movies. This almost unbelievable contract with former

366 As Coco Fusco argues in *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, it may have been a political decision that many of the photos that were released show women, whereas photos depicting soldiers raping prisoners have been kept from public view. The Bush administration has referred to them as young, naive white women, and they look less intimidating than the "oversized Special Forces commandos in black ninja suits and masks". Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, 19.

367 "Guggenheim, *Seven Easy Pieces*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/. Abramović's stated purpose was to create a documentation of performance art, but it can be argued that the reenactments were very staged and theatrical compared with the original performances, thus complicating the concept of archiving past performances through a live format. For more about authenticity and authorship in documentation and re-performance see Jessica Santone, "Marina Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces:* Critical Documentation Strategies for Preserving Art's History", *LEONARDO* 41:2 (2008), 147–52.

368 Mette Ingvartsen, *69 Positions*, accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.metteingvartsen.net/performance/69-positions/.

mass-murderers is carried out simultaneously with their reflections on their deeds. It is possible because the perpetrators are still supported by the leaders of the country; they are celebrated as heroes, and therefore they have not been prosecuted. The documentary performs a mind-boggling performative contract because it uses the same effective and affective Hollywood strategies as the perpetrators in the reenactments. It shows the power and ethical dilemmas of reenacting genocide with real people.

In this project I am interested in reenacting documents: the interviews I made in Argentina and the photos from Abu Ghraib. *The Act of Killing*, *69 Positions*, and *Seven Easy Pieces* are just a few, very different examples of reenactments.[369] In my research process I was situated somewhere in between, not reenacting a former performance work and not having real people reenacting past events on stage.[370] I wanted to reenact documented past events with my own body and the body of another performer.

How to Reenact the Photos from Abu Ghraib?

> I begin alone. I try to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib.
> **It doesn't work.**
>
> **Notes for *This is for her***

My first attempt to reenact the photos did not work. What do I mean by "not work"? And could this "not working" in fact be seen as an artistic strength, pointing to what Scarry would call the structure of unmaking – of making the victim invisible as a consequence of torture and of demonstrating that physical pain has no voice?[371] And could this "not working" point to the naked body as visible yet invisible in its representation of the victim and catch the complicity of the beholder, who is witness even if the performance of violence takes place in a theatre?

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369 For more about reenactments in a historical and artistic context see Antonio Caronia et al. (eds.), *RE:akt! Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-reporting* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2014), and Inke Arns, "History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance", curator's text for the exhibition at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, 2007, accessed 14 January 2019, http://en.inkearns.de/files/2011/05/HWRI-Arns-Kat-2007-engl.pdf.

370 This, of course, could not have been the victims or the perpetrators from the Abu Ghraib photos. But it could have been victims of torture and perpetrators telling their own story. Argentinian director Lola Arias often stages real people with traumatic experiences. In *Minefield* (2016), for instance, she brings together Argentine and British veterans from the Falklands/Malvinas war to explore what is left of it in their heads thirty-four years later. Accessed 14 January 2019, http://lolaarias.com/proyectos/campo-minado/.

371 Scarry's argument is discussed in Chapter 4.

At the beginning I wanted to undress the performer and let the naked body repeat the positions of the victims in the photos. I focused on the photos where England was present. The aim was to stretch the moment of the photos into the present, to make us see them again and sense the durational effect of torture. As we shall see later with Schneider, it is indeed possible to consider a performance as something that takes place across and with time. But the reenactments did not capture the temporality of pain. They seemed tasteless. Again: the original photos are tasteless, so why not adopt and transform this tastelessness into a representation of the abject?[372]

I think the difficulty of finding a way to reenact the photos has to do with the combination of the material (the photos) and the medium (performance). We can touch the unbearable on stage, but we cannot stand looking at reenactments that become too detailed. It becomes boring, bad taste, or even worse: awkwardly humorous. What do I mean by too detailed? The reenactments became too detailed because I attempted to represent the photos by copying them. But the reality of the photos and the reality of the performance are obviously not the same. A pose in a theatre can be a record, but if the aim is to represent the photos *as record*, it might work better to simply show the photos. Showing the naked performer's body pointed much more to this body than to the victim's body, so it did not appear to be a reenactment of a photo but rather an enactment of a performance.

The representation of shame and degradation in performance is complicated because the performer can just walk away, which is not the case for the victim. The artistic collective SIGNA often includes scenes of shame and degradation in their performance installations, such as *SALÒ* (2010). Here the audience is invited into a villa where they witness and sometimes join the so-called "Masters" in their debauchery scenarios inspired by Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Salò* (1976). The scenes are constructed (either improvised or rehearsed), and the audience can interact with the performers. This way the performances become as much about the audience's reaction and action as about the performer's performance. The spectator is confronted with ethical choices: for instance, when a young girl (performer) is being whipped or exposed to sexual assault. Should I stay? Should I go? Should I try to

372 I refer to psychoanalyst and theorist Julia Kristeva's perception of the abject, which she describes as the subjective horror when confronted with the failure of meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between self and other. The key example of such a reaction is the human corpse reminding us of our own materiality, but other examples are wounds or shit. See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

help the performer, although she has consented? Is it really necessary to construct potentially traumatic experiences in theatre in order to question the relation between spectatorship and action? Perhaps it is. Even if I did not enjoy being there, *SALÒ* created scenes of violence from which it became difficult for both audience and performer to walk away.

A different example is Abramović, who in the performance *Lips of Thomas* (1975) has explored how the audience reacts to pain and endurance and in *Rhythm O* (1974) looked at how the audience is willing to cause her pain and humiliation. The power of these performances is that the audience can stop the performance but that the performer will not do so. In live art or body art the naked performer-body appears as a self-referential tool to either explore the body as material, use the body as material, or refer to other naked performer-bodies. These strategies can be transferred to a theatrical context. Ingvartsen, for instance, is naked throughout *69 Positions* in order to reenact past performances focusing on body and sexuality by her and others. However, this is very different from representing suffering, distorted bodies. Ingvartsen can use humour to reenact nudity performances, and this humour makes it even easier to look at her naked body for more than an hour.

Humour seems awkward – and inappropriate – in the representation of torture. Imagine a scene where the performer reenacts one of the photos and then just gets up and continues the performance. This would appear comical, absurd, or even transgress the severity of the theme, and that was not the intention in my work. But again, could such a strategy be a strength? Imagine that we create a scene where we (the performers and the audience) are the perpetrators watching. That I, for instance, sit up among the audience and we look at the performer reenacting one of the photos and I say: "That's quite funny, isn't it?" And because it is "just" a performer lying there, it is actually funny. I can imagine this performance – it was one of the things we tried – but I was not after "funny". And if I had been among the audience for this imagined performance, I would have stood up and walked out of the theatre, thinking: "OK, OK, I get the point. We are all perpetrators. We are all responsible. But, really, I do not buy it. I am not a perpetrator like England."

The audience looks at a photo in the theatre, but it is not a photo: there are no real soldiers, no real victims. The reenactment of a photo is both a reiteration of a past event and the creation of a new

one. Austin famously argued that performative utterances spoken by an actor on stage are hollow, not used seriously, and appear parasitic upon their normal use in language.[373] This distinction between parasitic and normal language has been criticised by Derrida, who points out that repetition is necessary in order for a performative utterance to succeed; in other words, we would not understand performative utterances if they did not cite a known code.[374] My concern about how to reenact the photos is caught somewhere in between these two readings of performativity. On the one hand, I find that the reenactments are indeed hollow and parasitic upon their photographic model. On the other, I find that one of the important gestures of reenacting the photos relies on what Derrida calls citation and iterability, because the reenactments point to the fact that the original photos are themselves citing and reenacting visual form of representation in popular culture. I will come back to this later. At this point in time I was stuck and I asked myself: "Should I give up the reenactments?" And I answered: "No. But I need to look somewhere else, I need to read something, look at something, that will help me understand how to reenact the photos."

373 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 22.

374 Jacques Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte", in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 387–9.


CLASSIC

Regarding the Pain of Others. Photography

> We want her to describe the pain. We want to understand why. We want to know. We **want** to know. In the beginning we want to see. After a while we are not so interested. It's the old discussion of looking or not looking. Some say we should look. Some say we should look away.
>
> *This is for her*

In *Regarding the Pain of Others* Sontag argues that our knowledge of war is mediated through a camera. Modern life is characterised by non-stop imagery, and photos hold a special position as "memory-freeze-frames".[375] They make us remember. Taking Francisco Goya's etchings *Los desastres de la guerra* (1810–20) as a point of reference, Sontag points to the sensibility of the viewer caught in the dilemma of whether to look or to look away.[376] Goya's images of the disasters of war carry a double invitation of looking and not looking because they, apart from the gruesome subjects, also carry titles such as *No se puede mirar* ("One can't look") or *Esto es lo verdadero* ("This is the truth"). I examined this proposal in *I Love You You Love Me* in relation to the photos from Abu Ghraib. "You" said, "I don't know if we should even look at these pictures ever again", and "I" answered, referring to the unnamed protagonist "she": "But *she* is looking at them. She is looking at the pictures. Scandalous pictures." Later I deleted this melodramatic (and ironic) statement. While Sontag underlines that war photography has a "duty to record" history,[377] she also proposes to question the unreliability of sensationalist documentary photography. But does this mean that we should look away? Even if photos are framed, and even if we live in a culture of spectatorship, where photos of real atrocities appear as fictions, I think that it is valid to ask the viewer to critically "take an attitude of belief toward relevant propositional content", as film theorist Carl Plantinga characterises documentary.[378] The question of how to capture the indexicality of documentary continues to trouble film theorists, but this struggle between object and

Previous three pages: **Figure 27** from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance.

375 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 22.

376 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 45.

377 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 52.

378 Carl Platinga, "What a Documentary Is, After All", in Julian Stallabrass (ed.), *Documentary* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 61.

referent does not necessarily prescribe the viewer to look away.[379]

Sontag underlines the fact that, even though photographs point to reality, and are in some sense documentary, they are never fully transparent representations but are chosen images: "to photograph is to frame and to frame is to exclude."[380] She points to the double nature of war photographs, which claim on the one hand to be authentic documents of reality and on the other hand to be beautiful images that make us look at them.[381] The problem is not that many of the iconic photographs are staged realities but, rather, that they have become part of what we call "collective memory", which, according to Sontag, is a fiction.[382] These photos participate in the circulation of what a society has chosen to be important, what is to be remembered, but they do not help us understand: "Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us."[383] War photos wake us up and show us the atrocities of a historical moment, but they do not explain that moment: "Perhaps too much value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking", Sontag argues.[384] While I agree that the memory of a picture does not contribute to an understanding of a complex historical or political conflict, it strikes me that one could reasonably ask whether narratives do not also frame and thereby exclude, in the same way as photographs?[385] I find it hard to think of a narrative about a historical or political conflict that is not framed by its author and that does not haunt us. An example is Sontag's own reports about fighting and political violence written in Sarajevo during the Yugoslav Wars (1991–9), which are critical and haunting war narratives. Narratives also simplify and interpret reality, but perhaps it is too easy to criticise Sontag on this point since what she is asking for is a narrative that can explain something given

379 Interestingly, Arthur M. Kleinman suggests how Sontag's analysis of "our" (here understood as people involved in war, aid workers and others) response to people suffering can be used to make a political call for the policymakers "so that the terrible burden of our experiences can bring the reality of social suffering to weigh on those who are responsible for waging war, to move them to prevent it". See Arthur M. Kleinman, "Regarding the Pain of Others (review)", *Literature and Medicine*, 22:2 (2003), 257–61.

380 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 46.

381 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 76–8.

382 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 85.

383 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 89.

384 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 115.

385 What is the effect or performativity of narratives? In the 1934 lecture "Portraits and Repetition", Gertrude Stein proposes that "novels are soothing" because they situate us in a present where we can safely relate to past events. But living now – "the existence of living" – is about what happens and is about to happen, not about what happened in the past. Taking this statement we may ask whether narratives blur the present reality or whether they can actually make us understand. Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", in Catherine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (eds.), *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932–1946* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States: 1998), 297.

its length and complexity. While not wanting research-based performance to explain its subject matter, I do think that it should provide a thorough, reflected representation. *Regarding the Pain of Others* made me decide to focus on text rather than image. As we shall see with Butler in a moment, both photos and narratives of war are staged and framed, but it seems to be a necessary task to examine the mechanisms of framed and staged representations.

Importantly, Sontag's perception of photography changed along the lines of war representation. In her 1977 book *On Photography* she argues that the photographic image has lost its capacity to shock, that we have become numb as a result of the massive accumulation of images in the media, and that we therefore have a reduced ability to react ethically, affectively, or politically to the visual representations of suffering.[386] In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, photos have regained their possibility to shock but are to be conceived of as unreal representations of real atrocities. In 2004, she published the essay *Regarding the Torture of Others* as a response to the publication of the photos from Abu Ghraib. Here she underlines that it is important to look at these photos because they bear witness to a normalisation of violence and pornography.[387] I agree that the pictures from Abu Ghraib do not make us understand: they shock. But the publication of the photos was and is necessary for creating political awareness. Sontag would agree and disagree. As Warwick Mules asks about her understanding of photography: "Are they a powerful evidential force for political action, or are they deceptive, seductive images that lend themselves to voyeurism and consumer display?"[388] Probably both. The frames of representation change in accordance with the realities that they reflect. I was interested in examining these frames more and turned to Butler, who draws a conceptual framework for looking at the photos from Abu Ghraib.

386 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Penguin, 1977).

387 Sontag, *Regarding the Torture of Others*. Web edition accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html.

388 Warwick Mules, "Review of Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*", *Australian Humanities Review* 33 (2004), accessed 14 January 2019, http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2004/08/01/review-of-susan-sontags-regarding-the-pain-of-others/.

Blinding Frames

In "Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag", Butler analyses how the framing of human suffering affects our perception and thinking and determines our reactions.[389] Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, "embedded reporting" has led to a staging of war reality.[390] The state orchestras the representation of war – what is seen and what is hidden. War photos are interpretations and not, as Sontag argued in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, punctual shocks that demand a narrative to provide understanding.[391] Photos *work*, but they are shown in different frames, which make them alter their meaning. Whether we respond or not depends on how the human is transmitted through the visual frames. Butler suggests that embedded reporting implicitly occurred in the Abu Ghraib photos since those who took the photos were "actively involved in the perspective of the war".[392] The photographer and the photographed were clearly protected by the military. They acted within shared social norms of the war, and the photographs contributed to the framing, realisation, and continuation of the event of torture.[393] Butler makes us aware that photos frame and thereby interpret reality by determining what is important within the frame.[394] I cannot help posing the unpleasant questions: what would have happened if the photos would not have been disseminated? And would they have been war veteran trophies, or would the geographical and temporal distance between Abu Ghraib and a home in the US have created a whole new frame, provoking regret, anger, fear, or sorrow? Can we even begin to think about how to frame these photos in a way where we see the reality of the photo within both the frames in the photo and the frames of representation? Let's continue.

Butler argues that the act of taking the photos, the triumphant perpetrators in the photos, and the circulation of the photos all bear

389 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 64.

390 Butler argues that the Bush administration reinforced the regulation of the representation of war in order to set the political agenda and avoid political opposition to the war. Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 64–6. In embedded reporting, the journalists are protected by the military, and in return they are not supposed to report information that can compromise the military effort. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag argues that embedded reporting already began with the coverage of the Falklands War and that we could find other examples in history where the relation between journalists and military probably result in a biased perspective. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 65. However, the term was first used in the coverage of the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

391 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 67.

392 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 65.

393 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 83.

394 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 67.

witness to the "banalization of evil" played out in war reality.[395] They caused alarm only when people outside the frames of war and imprisonment saw the photos. As opposed to Sontag, Butler suggests that the Abu Ghraib photos "neither numb our senses nor determine a particular response [...] they occupy no single time nor space".[396] The photos are framed and received differently in changing contexts. Therefore, we may argue that Butler's reading of the photos is in itself a framing, and any artistic representation will be too. According to Butler, the task is to become aware of the frames that blind us and thereby change our understanding of what we see. In other words, the task is to perform critical spectatorship:

> if there is a critical role for visual culture during times of war it is precisely to thematize the forcible frame, the one that conducts the dehumanizing norm that restricts what is perceivable, and indeed what can be.[397]

As I understand Butler, the task is to see the document while at the same time interpreting the frames that surround it. How can critical spectatorship be transferred to a performance? I find it difficult to give a critical visual account of torture in a performance; that is, I find it difficult to first be a critical spectator of the blinding frames of the original Abu Ghraib photos and then transfer this criticality to performance. Why is that? How would performance be different from a critical visual account? Or can performance be seen as a mode or form of critical visual account? The fact that performance is not only visual, and sometimes not even primarily visual, is important. I understand the "frames" that Butler refers to as interpretive frames of visuality that orchestrate the narration of war. When confronting Butler's thinking with performance practice, several questions arise. Are there not frames of performance? What are those frames, and how are they different from visual or photographic frames?

I want to propose that the frames of performance consist of several interacting layers: the stage, the body, and the audience, who are present in the same space and time as the representation. Butler emphasises that the photographs frame reality using "various effects

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395 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 91. Butler echoes Hannah Arendt's concept of "the banality of evil" performed in the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

396 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 78.

397 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 100.

of angle, focus, light etc."[398] These effects are used in performance too, but performance also provides other frames of narration or interpretation when reenacting the photos. A key component of performance is that it offers "shared spectatorship", which means that the artist and the audience look at a staged picture together in a temporal and spatial frame. If this moment is to become a moment of critical spectatorship, the audience has to see through the representational frames of the performance.

Further, the frame of the live body or bodies plays an important role because it proposes that the audience is watching a performance in a theatre and not in a prison in Iraq. This is not to question the degree of "liveness" in the photos compared with the performance; clearly the indexicality of the live body on stage can be compared to the indexicality of the live body in the photos; clearly the degree of "performance" in the photos can be compared to the performance in the theatre; and clearly both the photos and the performance have an audience already thought into their representational frames.[399] But the intentional frames of the two formats differ. As Butler argues, photos *work*, but they are shown in different frames, which make them alter their meaning. Reenactment is a different frame: not only visual but also visual, framed, narrated, interpreted, and generating new interpretations. Thus, performance is different from a critical visual account but is also a form of critical visual account. So perhaps the task is not to give a critical *visual* account but rather to give a critical *performance* account.

Who, then, is to perform critical spectatorship – the audience or the artist? I would say both. The artist looking at the researched material and the audience looking at the performance. The artist will inevitably set up new frames for the audience to interpret. And here is the challenge. The artist is now the one who orchestrates the representation and sets up the frames. A way to accommodate this challenge could be to show the frames, to point to them, or question them. But being too didactic will, of course, set up new frames.

Focusing on the photos from Abu Ghraib, I find it important that

398 Butler, "Torture and the Ethics of Photography", 67.

399 Philip Auslander's concept of "liveness" designates that there is not an unambiguous dichotomy between live and mediatised representations today. On the contrary, the use of different media adds authenticity to the live performance and the idea of liveness adds authenticity to the mediatised performance: "Live performance thus has become the means by which mediatized representations are naturalized, according to the simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the im-mediate: if the mediatized image can be recreated in a live setting, it must have been real to begin with." Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 38–9.

the frame of a photo has much to do with what we see and what we do not see: who's taking it, how staged is it, where is it circulated. The frames of performance are quite different in that it is not real torture; it is clearly staged, and it is not circulated in the same way as a photograph or a document. I think that in order to give a critical performance account, the task is to emphasise the representational doubling of the frames from photo to performance. It might be that we need Goya's extra layer, the signs that tell us what we see and make us aware of ourselves seeing – aware of the frames that blind us.

Re-Action. Re-Presentation. Reenactment

In July 2014 a Danish Middle East correspondent for the daily newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad*, Allan Sørensen, took a photo of Israelis gathering on a hilltop outside the Israeli town of Sderot to watch the bombardment of Gaza. He uploaded the photo to Twitter with the hashtag "Sderot cinema". Later he explained that this is not new but something that happens in war, where civilians and fighters "go through a process of dehumanizing the enemy".[400] War tourism is an old phenomenon which has been documented on several occasions: for example, in the paintings of war watchers at the First Battle of Bull Run during the American Civil War in 1861.[401] It also refers to journeys after the war to battlefields, cemeteries, and memorials in order construct or reconstruct memory.[402] Now, watching a battle at a temporal or spatial distance is not the same as watching pain at close range. If we follow Sontag's description of the war photo and Butler's discussion of the frames of war, we might suggest that battlefield tourists watch pain through different frames, constructing a fiction of reality.

Torture is visually represented in popular culture.[403] Torture is

400 Robert Mackey, "Israelis Watch Bombs Drop on Gaza From Front-Row Seats", *New York Times* (15 July 2014), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/15/world/middleeast/israelis-watch-bombs-drop-on-gaza-from-front-row-seats.html.

401 John J. Hennessy, "War Watchers at Bull Run During America's Civil War", *Civil War Times* (August 2001), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.historynet.com/war-watchers-at-bull-run-during-americas-civil-war.htm.

402 For more about battlefield tourism see the anthology *Military Pilgrimage and Battlefield Tourism*, which provides insights into the relationship between military, religious, and secular participants in what has been called "secular pilgrimage", "dark tourism", "military/religious tourism", and "re-enactment". John Eade and Mario Katic (eds.), *Military Pilgrimage and Battlefield Tourism: Commemorating the Dead* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017). For an insightful discussion on the ethical and political implications of military spectatorship see Jan Mieszkowski, *Watching War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

403 See Alex Adams, *Political Torture in Popular Culture: The Role of Representations in the Post-9/11 Torture Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Adams argues that the representation of torture in popular culture has shaped the way torture is discussed in the aftermath of 9/11.

an integral part of the film *Saw*, from 2004, which even spawned a genre of its own: "torture porn horror".[404] The television series *24* (2001–10), about the Counter Terrorist Unit agent Jack Bauer, and the more recent *Homeland* (2011–), about the CIA agent Carrie Mathison, show excessive use of torture in the fight against terrorism. The film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), by Mel Gibson, has an uninterrupted forty-five-minute sequence of the torture of Christ. One could argue that Christianity is a religion that repeats and forgive the execution of torture and that violence is an unavoidable part of the action genre, but nonetheless it is very disturbing. Torture has become mainstream, aesthetic, and accepted as entertaining representation. These fictions may not change our view of counterterrorism and the use of torture, but they may calibrate what we find acceptable. They take place in a society that renegotiates the use of torture.

The Geneva Convention of 1949 established the standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war and was ratified in whole or with reservations by 196 countries.[405] The United Nations Convention against Torture has been effective since 1987 and is today signed by 164 countries.[406] While these treaties lay the foundation for fighting war crimes such as torture, one could reasonably ask: at what point was there no torture? Human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, have documented many examples of infractions of the treaties. Are we completely sure that there were not violations of the agreements in conflicts that "we" (here: Denmark) participated in before the War on Terror?

How do we relate rationally and emotionally to the devaluation of the human body that follows torture as part of our warfare? How can art represent these issues in an engaging and critical way? In what follows I will focus on a video installation, which reenacts and retells scenes of crisis and conflict: in this case, narratives of flight.[407]

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404 For a critical introduction to torture porn horror see Steve Jones, *Torture Porn: Popular Horror after Saw* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

405 *The Geneva Convention*, "International Committee of the Red Cross", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/geneva-conventions-1949-additional-protocols.

406 *The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, United Nations Human Rights, accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx.

407 I chose to analyse this work because it provided insights about reenactment that I used directly in my work with *This is for her*.

Reenacting Spoken Narratives: Candice Breitz's Video Installation *Love Story*

> This is not a Hollywood movie. This is real life.
>
> **Candice Breitz, *Love Story*, 2016**[408]

These are the words of famous Hollywood actor Alec Baldwin in Candice Breitz's seven-channel installation *Love Story* (2016).[409] But are these the words of Baldwin or of somebody else?

The installation has two rooms. In the first room, I see Baldwin and Julianne Moore telling first-person narratives of flight on a large projected surface, almost like a film screen. From the outset I realise that these stories are not Baldwin's and Moore's but belong to somebody else. The video cross-cuts between the two movie stars but also between different personal narratives. Slowly I come to recognise the different people that they are portraying by voice, intonation, gestures, and small objects (jewellery and sunglasses).

In the second room I am confronted by six monitors, each showing a person who has fled his or her country for different reasons: Sarah Ezzat Mardini, who escaped war-torn Syria; José Maria João, a former child soldier from Angola; Mamy Maloba Langa, a survivor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Shabeena Francis Saveri, a transgender activist from India; Luis Ernesto Nava Molero, a political dissident from Venezuela; and Farah Abdi Mohamed, a young atheist from Somalia. Here I get the full interviews of the six characters who present the narrative material behind Moore's and Baldwin's speech – Moore representing the three women, and Baldwin representing the three men.

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408 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:45:30-00:45:36, first room.

409 Candice Breitz's *Love Story* (2016) was commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne), Outset Germany (Berlin), and Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg. For the National Gallery of Victoria Triennial (2017), Breitz gave the work a new title: *Wilson Must Go*. The title is a protest against the museum's current use of the firm Wilson Security, a company that oversaw the imprisonment of thousands of immigrants and refugees to Australia on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island and the island nation of Nauru. In a statement titled "Why I'm Sabotaging My Own Work – Wilson Must Go", Breitz writes: "Under contract to the Australian government […] Wilson Security has violently enforced the imprisonment of refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia's offshore immigration detention centres. The horrific effects of indefinite mandatory detention are well-documented. The allegations against Wilson Security since the commencement of their contracts on Manus Island and Nauru in 2012 are extensive and disturbing." See Sarah Cascone, "Artist Candice Breitz Has Found a Creative Way to Protest a Museum's Link to Refugee Prison Camps", Artnet News (12 December 2017), accessed 14 January 2019, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/breitz-wilson-ngv-victoria-protest-936437. I saw the installation in the South African Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2017). I had a privileged access to the work since I was able to see the videos several times and from the beginning online. Therefore I use a situated "I". However, I try to invite the reader into my reading of the work's enunciation and by the end I include a "we", suggesting that the work is talking not just to me as a singular individual but to the group of privileged subjects that I, and probably the reader of this text, are part of.

The "writing" of *Love Story* – how the work comes into being – consists in the editing, which provides for a complex dramaturgy that mirrors the complexity of the individual narratives. The video in the first room is organised around themes such as sexuality, representation, and the difficulty of telling one's story, and descriptions of the refugees' home countries and their arrival in a new country. After setting up a reflexive meta-frame, the work moves into the more complicated narratives of the six individuals.

I will now focus on the first room, the representation of the six narratives. In the beginning of the film the premise of the work is set up. Moore and Baldwin are sitting in a green set studio talking to the camera. Somebody (Breitz) is asking the two actors questions from behind the camera. It seems that Moore and Baldwin are preparing, showing the personal objects that we will later understand belong to the different characters. The word "character" is mentioned several times in the video, transforming the people represented into possible fictional characters. At the beginning the different characters reflect (through Baldwin and Moore) on the participation of Baldwin and Moore in the movie that Breitz is going to make about them.

Julianne Moore: OK.
Alec Baldwin: Ready.
JM: I'm ready. Her name is Julie.
AB: Well, first of all I want to thank him.
Candice Breitz: Who?
AB: Oh sorry, I'll repeat. First of all I want to thank Alex – oh Alec!
JM: Sorry, could you repeat her name?
Candice Breitz: Julie.
JM: Julie. OK, Julie.
AB: The name is Alec. I just want to tell Mr Alec, when this guy Alec tells my story, he has to get it right.
JM: My message to her … I know she is a big person, famous.
AB: Mr Alec, you must be happy when you get … be happy that Candice is giving you this opportunity to give people my story. To tell them about my life.
JM: My message to Julie … I really don't know that much about her, but what I know is, because they are famous people all over the news, TV, I know that when she will listen to the story and share it with the world, it won't be the same as if it was just me coming to stand here, just me sharing my story, because I don't think all

> those nice people would come just to listen to my story. I don't think so.[410]

From the outset the double performative contract of the work is made clear: Moore and Baldwin are both performing themselves and performing or reenacting the six characters shown in the backroom. Most of the shots in the first section of the work are close-ups, so it is not possible to see the objects that represent the different characters, and the cross-editing is fast, which makes it hard to distinguish the different voices, making the statements appear as one voice urging Moore and Baldwin to represent them in the right way, to tell their stories and to use their status as Hollywood stars to make the world listen.

> AB: Tell them what I went through. Tell them about the war. Tell them how they took me from my village to fight when I was still a child.[411]

> AB: My story is not about pity or sadness, it's not about how difficult my life has been. Everyone in the world must know how I was before, when I was young.[412]

> JM: Some of the most pressing social issues of our times came into the limelight only after Hollywood actors and actresses performed certain roles.[413]

410 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:38:43-00:40:10, first room.

411 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:40:25-00:40:35, first room.

412 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:41:06-00:41:18, first room.

413 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:42:50-00:43:02, first room.

Figure 28, Candice Breitz, stills from *Love Story*, 2016. Video installation. With Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore. Top: Alec Baldwin. From left José Maria João, Farah Abdi Mohamed, and Luis Ernesto Nava Molero. Courtesy Goodman Gallery, Kaufmann Repetto and KOW.

Figure 29, Candice Breitz, stills from *Love Story*, 2016. Video installation. With Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore. Top: Julianne Moore. Bottom: Sarah Ezzat Mardini. Courtesy Goodman Gallery, Kaufmann Repetto and KOW.

In the article "Oh! Oh! Love: Candice Breitz' Monologues for Troubled Times", Zoé Whitley writes that Moore is a medium: "The personal narratives of three people are channelled through her."[414] Whitley argues that Moore appears more human than ever because we see her "unvarnished, freckled and creased" and that "[t]his makes her words utterly convincing. I believe her story implicitly."[415] While I agree that Moore is sitting there without much make-up and apparently in her own black clothes, she is not a medium in the sense of someone who just makes her body and voice available for the character, who then appears through the representation. She is not transparent and she clearly gives interpretations of the three people. Thus, her way of performing a medium is to insert a distance between her and the represented characters, and in that way to install a Brechtian *Verfremdung* in the work.

> JM: I would like to thank wholeheartedly Julie for agreeing to play my character, Shabeena […] for using her personality, using her body, and for using her voice to show my character, to portray my character. Thank you so much.[416]

When Shabeena thanks Moore for using her personality, body, and voice to portray her, it is clear that there is a distance between the actress, Moore, and the character she portrays. Notice also that Shabeena refers to herself as a "character" and in that way already understands herself as a representation.

The distance between Moore and the person represented is perhaps most clear in her appropriation of Sarah, a Syrian teenage girl. Moore allows herself to perform a teenage girl with all the narcissism and contradiction that this representation contains. The contrast between the young teenager represented and the much older actress who represents her makes me aware of the distance between the two, and opens an ironic quality of the work that makes me smile several times while at the same time feeling embarrassed that I am smiling over the representation of a supposedly traumatic narrative of flight.

The clear distance between character and actress points to the constructed nature of the work and sparks awareness of – in Butler's

414 Zoé Whitley, "Oh! Oh! Love: Candice Breitz's Monologues for Troubled Times", Lucy MacGarry and Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (eds.), *Candice Breitz + Mohau Modisakeng*, exhibition catalogue (Venice: South African Pavilion, 2017), 71.

415 Whitley, "Oh! Oh! Love", 71.

416 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:44:57-00:45:26, first room.

words – the frames (that blind us) in the representation of the current migration crises. The alienation effect makes the frames of representation visible as an interpretive choice, and making that choice visible allows the frames of the work to no longer blind – for a moment. Importantly, it is the performer (Moore) who does this. The performer is also a framing device (like a photograph). The performer reenacts and frames the material at the same time.

It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine an un-framed representation. *Love Story* is framed by way of narrating, acting, editing, and setting up the physical installation in two performative spaces where the large projection with Moore and Baldwin gets much more space and focus than the monitors with the refugees. The frames become visible using distantiation; it makes use of and displays its own (blinding) frames at the same time, thus performing what Butler would call a critical account calling for critical spectatorship.

The six characters themselves reflect on the challenges and possibilities of representation:

> AB: I have to say, Hugo Chávez was right about some things, especially here, in the United States. Something, for example, that I don't like is the way that so many people follow superficial issues in the media, on television news, in the newspapers. They aren't too interested in social issues.
>
> JM: What can I say? No people like us, we're survivors. Really survivors. People don't even care about us. They would never put us up on a movie screen and talk about us. No one, no one cares. No one. No one talks about us.
>
> AB: Hugo Chávez used to talk about the Hollywood dictatorship, and even if I never supported his politics, I have to agree that Hollywood has created a lot of false idols, false role models.
>
> JM: Who's talking about me? Who cares about my story? Who talks about what I went through?
>
> AB: It distracts people from thinking about real issues. The reality in other countries.[417]

417 Breitz, *Love Story*, 00:45:45-00:47:03, first room.

Figure 30, Candice Breitz, installation view of *Love Story*, 2016. Video installation. With Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore. Left to Right: Shabeena Francis Saveri, Mamy Maloba Langa, Sarah Ezzat Mardini, Farah Abdi Mohamed, José Maria João, Luis Ernesto Nava Molero. Installation View: South African Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2017 Photograph: Andrea Rossetti. Courtesy Goodman Gallery, Kaufmann Repetto and KOW.

Is *Love Story* about representation or about refugees? It is about both. The work gives a critique of simplified narratives and the "Hollywood Dictatorship", but at the same time it performs this model demonstrating that it works, because I *do* listen to Baldwin and Moore and I *do* get the weird sensation that I get to know the six characters through their high-speed edited representations.[418] I am seduced by the Hollywood model of the first room and find it more interesting than the original interviews in the second room.

In spite of the constructed nature of Moore's and Baldwin's representation I experience empathy and discomfort.[419] But at the same time the work shows that I might be more interested in their representation of the stories than in the actual narratives. One might ask: do I even care about the individual story? At this point, I have the experience of being addressed not only as myself but also as a "we". One might ask: how are we to situate the kind of consumption of otherness that goes along with so-called empathy of a "we" or an "us" versus a "them"? In *Love Story* "we" is clearly both Moore and Baldwin, and Breitz, and me, even if the characters refer to Moore and Baldwin as "them". In making these uncomfortable questions apparent, the

418 Interestingly, Schneider discloses "what it means to be an actress versus a person recognizable as other than an actress" in relation to Jean-Luc Godard's and Jean-Pierre Gorin's critique of Jane Fonda for posing in North Vietnam in 1972. According to Godard and Gorin, Fonda could not represent anything but the American actress in a documentary photo. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 152. In *Love Story* Moore's and Baldwin's star status challenges our reaction to documentary narratives.

419 I am aware that by writing "empathy" I am dealing with a thorny subject. To examine this topic one could begin by engaging with Susan Leigh Foster's *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, which traces the changing definitions of choreography, kinesthesia, and empathy from the seventeenth century in order to examine the experience of dance. Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010). However, in this case I use "empathy" in the meaning of the word as the "action of understanding [...] the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another" (Merriam-Webster). Clearly I cannot understand, but I can have the experience that I understand and then the work may make me aware that I did not understand anyway.

work is about us seeing. It examines whom we are willing to see and listen to and what we are willing to hear.

Love Story shows the humanity and individuality of each person who is also a refugee. What if the refugee is not sympathetic? What if I do not like him or her? A current trend in theatre is to put real refugees on stage.[420] Another is to use actors who look like the people they represent.[421] In *Love Story*, however, Baldwin and Moore appear as the opposite of the refugees they represent. Sometimes the representation is even humorous. However, the humour is not a provocation toward political incorrectness. Rather, it points to an inherent trap in the reenactments of testimonies, because giving an account of oneself[422] often bears a touch of narcissism mixed with sincerity.

Alexander Koch writes that some kind of collaboration between the refugees and the film stars takes place in the work.[423] If so, it seems to be a very staged collaboration orchestrated by Breitz. *Love Story* does not provide a collective account of the migrant crisis. The work represents only six narratives from three women and three men. Further, I have to listen to the full interviews in the backroom to get a continuous account. I do not get a documentation of the horror of migration. The reenactment of the narratives is an artistic appropriation that both shows us the blinding frames in the current media representation of migration and at the same time constructs a frame through which I as a spectator can react to my own response to the representation of the migrant crisis. It is significant that I do not watch each interview in its full length and complexity. Perhaps I only watch part of them to see the real characters behind Moore's and Baldwin's representations: the transgender, the homosexual, the competition swimmer, the child soldier, the victim of rape, the ideal-

420 In a Danish context, for instance, Christian Lollike in *Uropa* (2016), accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.sort-hvid.dk/projekt/uropa/, and Fix & Foxy in *Lampedusa Cruises* (2016), accessed 14 January 2019, http://fixfoxy.com/projekter/lampedusa-cruises. The staging of real people as living documents may raise ethical questions about the repetition of trauma night after night. What does it mean to retell trauma? Does it help the tellers to create a new narrative that works for them, or does it reinforce a trauma of the past? For more on this topic see Sabrina Vitting-Seerup, "'Flygtninge' på scenen – dilemmaer og potentialer", *Peripeti* 29/30 (2018), 127–37. For more on theatre and therapy see Joy K. Kalu, "Inszenierung trifft Krise. Das Subjekt der Enthüllung", in Peter Sinapius (ed.), *Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen der Künstlerischen Therapien/Intermedialität und Performativität in den Künstlerischen Therapien* (Hamburg, Potsdam, and Berlin: HPB University Press, 2017). See also Mick Wallis and Patrick Duggan (eds.), *Performance Research* 16:1 (2011), special issue "On Trauma".

421 For instance, Milo Rau in *Mitleid* (2016), accessed 14 January, 2019, http://international-institute.de/en/compassion-the-history-of-the-machine-gun/.

422 With reference to Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

423 Alexander Koch, "Candice Breitz: *Love Story*", accessed 14 January 2019. http://www.candicebreitz.net/assets/docs/LoveStory_ESSAYS_+_FOOTAGE.pdf.

istic atheist, a human exhibition of different refugees.[424]

Love Story stages individual narratives of migration with fiction, distance, and affect, and make us aware that we cannot place the responsibility for empty representation of crises only on the media – we are also responsible for reacting to the individual and collective account of migration. Thus, the work negotiates the possibility of reenacting personal narratives in a meaningful way. The aim of the work is not to make "clean" reenactments of the individual stories. Quite the contrary: the aim is to fail – but to fail in a meaningful way.

At the end of *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag writes that a narrative seem to be more effective than an image not least because of the duration that we give the narrative.[425] However, she highlights Jeff Wall's staged photograph *Dead Troops Talk (A Vision After an Ambush of a Red Army Patrol near Moqor, Afghanistan, Winter 1986)* as a powerful representation of war. The photograph is not a document but a construction created in the artist's studio. It turns to us, like Goya's prints *Los desastres de la guerra*, with an invitation to look at war's horror while at the same time rejecting our gaze: "We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like."[426] In *Love Story* we also meet this double exclamation: listen! You will never really understand what we've been through. But the more time you spend with us, the more you will get to know us, the condition of flight and of human suffering. Moore and Baldwin are not living documents. They rather point to the messiness of representation. However, in pointing to this messiness they also carry some shard of the stories, some act of witnessing, incomplete and vexed as it may be. So even if the material of the six refugees is framed, appropriated, and edited, parts of the stories survive; small

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424 Here we might think of South African director Brett Bailey's human installation *Exhibit B* (2010), which critically displays the human exhibitions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The performance was prohibited in New York and London as a consequence of protests. A spokesperson for the Barbican (London) formulated the importance and challenges of the work: "Last night as *Exhibit B* was opening at the Vaults it became impossible for us to continue with the show because of the extreme nature of the protest and the serious threat to the safety of performers, audiences and staff. Given that protests are scheduled for future performances of *Exhibit B* we have had no choice but to cancel all performances of the piece. We find it profoundly troubling that such methods have been used to silence artists and performers and that audiences have been denied the opportunity to see this important work. *Exhibit B* raises, in a serious and responsible manner, issues about racism; it has previously been shown in 12 cities, involved 150 performers and been seen by around 25,000 people with the responses from participants, audiences and critics alike being overwhelmingly positive." Hugh Muir, "Barbican Criticises Protesters Who Forced *Exhibit B* Cancellation", The Guardian (24 September 2014), accessed 14 January 2019. www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/sep/24/barbican-criticise-protesters-who-forced-exhibit-b-cancellation. This ban is, of course, very disturbing. *Exhibit B*, accessed 14 January 2019, http://thirdworldbunfight.co.za/exhibit-b/. Bailey's performative installation *Sanctuary* (2017) reflects on the refugee crisis in Europe, accessed 14 January 2019, http://thirdworldbunfight.co.za/sanctuary/.

425 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 122.

426 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 125.

pieces travel into the artistic representation.[427]

As argued earlier, the photos from Abu Ghraib show the failure of the Western coalition's participation in the war in Iraq. "Copying" the photos did not create a narrative, as Sontag asks for, nor did it point to the frames that blind us, as Butler describes. The question is still how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib, perhaps failing, as in *Love Story*, but failing in a meaningful way.

Time, Liveness, and Death

> The event of photography is never over.
>
> **Ariella Azoulay, "Photography", 2011[428]**

In *Performing Remains*, Schneider writes about reenactment and time. She is interested in the repetitions and doublings and "the attempt to literally touch time through the residue of the gesture or the cross-temporality of the pose".[429] Both historical and artistic reenactments pose questions about how the past is remembered and how we construct the future of the past.[430] Thus, reenactments create emotional time gaps. Theatre can never be only live and present. It carries "other times" such as "delay, lag, doubling, duration, and return".[431]

In the chapter "Still Living", Schneider performs her understanding of the entanglement between reenactments and time through a reading of performance and photography with a focus on the Abu Ghraib photos.[432] She argues that the images are not only records of wartime, torture, and abuse, but can also be read as durational events that exist both then and there and here and now. Seeing the images as ongoing live events make it possible to understand them as some-

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427 Here it is important to mention Cathy Caruth's landmark work *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, which explores how the memory of traumatic events is not only to be understood through conscious understanding. Caruth argues that literature gives a new perspective on traumatic experience because it demonstrates how some things can be told only in indirect and surprising ways. I think that *Love Story* is an example of a performative work that provides new ways of thinking about and responding to the experience of trauma. Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

428 Ariella Azoulay, "Photography – The Ontological Question", *Mafte'akh*, 2 (2011), 77.

429 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 2.

430 Schneider's field of research is both historical reenactments and reenactments within theatre and performance art. She draws on artistic examples such as the Wooster Group, which has meticulously reenacted Richard Burton's *Hamlet*, or Abramović, who has instigated reenactments of her own performances in the show *The Artist Is Present* (MOMA, New York, 2010). In the context of historical reenactments she focuses on the living history reenactments of the American Civil War.

431 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 92.

432 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 138–68.

thing that we continue to witness and something that continues to call for a response.

Schneider argues for breaking with the opposition between performance and photography, where performance is considered a live event that disappears in time, while photography is considered a record of a past time. Instead she asks whether "the future subsists in the photograph as a future performance subsists in play-script or instruction art – as hail or call, the posing of a question, the demanding of a response?"[433] When we look at the Abu Ghraib photos, it is as if the future viewer is already inscribed in the moment of the shot. But one might ask: is this the same as the script that is already reaching into its future realisation in a theatre?

According to Schneider, photos carry an "inter-temporal enactment" actualising the photos in a durational now stretching from the moment of the shot to the moments of the photo being viewed again and again. As the perpetrators who took their photos as souvenirs of sorts knew full well, these images were meant to circulate into a future when they, as well as their friends, might look *again*. There is a complicity of looking, and a gestural futurity, in the images, that suggests a cross-temporal complicity. Nevertheless, this complicity means not that we should look away, but rather that we should explore the durational effect of the photos:

> Let us consider the Abu Ghraib images as digital images of torture in that the poses choreographed for the prisoners and often for the soldiers are reiterative positions of shame and degradation. But let us also consider that the shaming of the prisoners, taking place before the camera and through the camera, is, via the camera, cast into the future contained, already, as part of the scene.[434]

The photos are "scriptive things" because the future viewer will recognise the scenes as shameful. It is this pre-enactment of a future response that Schneider compares with the script that will later be realised in a theatre.

I agree with Schneider's aim to complicate the division between record and script. If we consider Derrida's concept of performativity as a continuous reiterative practice, I think we can see the pictures of Abu Ghraib as reiterations of choreographed scenes taking place

433 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 160.

434 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 162.

again and again when we look at the photos.[435] In the making of *This is for her* I tried to follow this line of thought while at the same time insisting that the torture took place in a specific moment at a specific place, and therefore the atrocity happened *even if the photos were never circulated in a future moment.*

While no one can miss the theatricality of the photos, they are also real events of torture, and this duality increases their complexity. It is this double nature of the photos as both real events of torture and staged photographic scenes of pain that secures their capacity as scriptive things that can make us experience and remember the shame again and again as complicit viewers. As Freud suggested, trauma constitutes itself into the future via repetition.[436] Following this, a pose may function like a photograph because it repeats the traumatic event and calls for a response in the spectator, which in itself will become a new request for a response. The photos are clearly performative – they do something to us as viewers, they reenact the shame of the moment, hail us into participation as delayed witnesses, and repeat the call for response. At the end of the chapter, Schneider writes that if "the photograph takes place [...] the action we take in response is 'in our hands.'"[437] This last statement emphasises that the photos not only make us (the viewers) complicit spectators but also oblige us to act.

Return and Repetition

> So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play.
>
> **Gertrude Stein, *Plays*, 1934**[438]

As a way to capture the temporality of time in theatre, Gertrude Stein conceived the concept of "syncopated" time, which points to the distance between the present time of the audience and the present time of the drama or, as Stein would have it, the syncopated time of the drama and the emotional time of the audience, which means that the emotion of the audience and the emotion of the drama are never taking place at the same time. When we (the viewer) look at the pho-

435 Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte".

436 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Newburyport, MA: Dover Publications, 2014).

437 Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 168.

438 Gertrude Stein, "Plays", in Catherine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (eds.), *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932–1946*. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States: 1998), 244.

tos from Abu Ghraib we may share Stein's frustration over theatre's syncopated time pointing to the discrepancy between the emotional time of the photos and the emotional time of the viewer.[439] We cannot react to what we see in the actual temporal moment, but we can still react in the stretched temporality where the photos take place again and again.

Let us return one last time to the question of how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib in a performance. The photos are framed as depicting reality; they perform a "realness" that is difficult to reproduce without crossing an ethical and aesthetic border about how to represent the real bodies of victims in art: how much can be shown, how detailed, and for what purpose?[440] At the same time the photos could be seen as reenactments of erotic and violent scenes in popular culture: the scenes themselves reenact cheerleading and death by crucifixion, among other popular iconographic or indexical gestures. A triple reenactment takes place: the scene in the theatre is reenacting a scene in a photograph that is extremely specific, local, and deadly but is also, by virtue of its staging, referring to other scenes that both precede it and will recur. We might consider the act of looking at the photos from Abu Ghraib as a performance. But we might also consider the scenes depicted in the photos as a performance, albeit with very real effects. To reenact the photos is to stage a third level of performance.

At this point in the research process I began asking myself: is it possible that transposing the photos to another medium, or just slightly bending the contextual frames, would make a difference? I could focus exclusively on the naked performer body letting the distorted positions develop in duration. Or I could find real victims to reenact the photos, creating unpleasant repetitions. However, I had chosen to work with text, I had chosen not to put real people on stage, and I believed these choices were right for the performance. I was looking for another way to bend the frames of reenactment.

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439 Schneider does not refer to Stein's concept of "syncopated time" here. In other parts of *Performing Remains* she uses it in order to explore the theatricality of time, most clearly in the chapter "In the Meantime: Performance Remains". Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 87–110.

440 Carolee Schneemann's work *Terminal Velocity* (2001–5) shows the falling bodies from the Twin Towers during 9/11 in large format. The work both makes us remember and opens a discussion of what is ethically and aesthetically problematic because the falling bodies are so big that they can nearly be identified, thus turning the viewer into a witness.

Written Reenactment: Thinking with Heiner Müller's Text *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture*

> the MURDER is an exchange of genders, ALIEN IN ONE'S OWN BODY, the knife is the wound, the neck the axe, is the fallible supervision part of a plan, to which device is the lens fastened, which sucks the color from the gaze, across which eye-socket is the retina stretched, who OR WHAT asks about the picture, LIVING IN THE MIRROR, is the man with the dance-step I [ICH: capitalized in original], his face my grave, I [ICH] the woman with the neck wound, right and left in the hands the divided bird, blood in the mouth, I [ICH] the bird, which shows the murderer the way into the night with the writing of its beak, I [ICH] the frozen storm.
> Heiner Müller, *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture*, 1984[441]

Can a text reenact an image? The quotation above is the end of Müller's *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture*. The text explores the possibility of describing a picture.[442] The language is violent, a continuous stream with few dots. At the centre of the text is a landscape between steppe and savannah, a man, a woman, a bird. An act of violence is taking place – the man is murdering the woman – but as it appears in the quotation, the text ends by suggesting a displacement between object and subject, between man and woman, between the "I" looking and what is looked at. There is no coherent narrative or dramatic structure, although the text is written for theatre.[443] The text continuously repeats the elements of a picture, exploring the before and after of the action, while at the same time questioning these elements: what is the relationship between the individual parts and who is the "I" looking? The doubling and reiteration of elements create a repetition of the title: an explosion of a memory.

I will not go further into Müller's text here. My aim is to suggest that it can be read as a written reenactment of a violent scene. Unlike the reenactments discussed above, *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture* is clearly an interpretation of a memory that the text acts

441 Heiner Müller, *Explosion of a Memory/Description of a Picture*, in *Explosion of a Memory*, ed. and trans. by Carl Weber (New York: PAJ, 1989), 93–102.

442 According to Müller, a drawing by a student from Sofia. See Heiner Müller, "Fünf Minuten Schwarzfilm, Rainer Crone spricht mit Heiner Müller", in *Gesammelte Irrtümer 2, Interviews und Gespräche*, eds. by Gregor Edelmann and Renate Ziemer (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1990), 137.

443 Müller, *Explosion of a Memory*, 102.

out. A double reenactment takes place: there is both the reenactment of an image in the text and the reenactment of the text in the future performance. As Schneider suggests, the temporality of theatre is always vexed when it come to reenactment. A script is posed towards a future reenactment, and as such it is a pre-enactment. Reading a script as a pre-enactment of a reenactment seems complicated, of course. But what I am trying to argue here is that this mind-boggling complexity has to take place if we are to touch the incomprehensible problem of violence in torture.[444]

Reading Müller's text as both a reenactment of a picture and a pre-enactment of a future performance made me think of three important motives for my research about how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib: 1) reenactments are interpretations of the reality reenacted; 2) reenactments sometimes contain a doubling of the reality reenacted; 3) reenactments question who is looking.

There Will Be No Naked Bodies, No Blood, No Actual Torture, Taking Place Tonight

While writing this chapter, I worked with the reenactments in *This is for her*. I think that there are a lot of ways it could have been done, but I chose two strategies: on the one hand, I developed a score of the perpetrator's movements based on the circulated photographs; on the other, I tried to describe the pictures through language. Bugaj and I did not reenact the poses of the victims. As discussed earlier, we tried, but even in the black box they looked like erotic and violent scenes from popular culture, scenes that were themselves reenacted in the photos. I was not interested in visually reiterating these victim scenes. I have not found a way to represent the pain of others. But I tried to show the complicity of the soldier and the witness both within and outside the frame: that is, to see how I as a citizen, we as citizens, in a country that were allies during the war in Iraq, are somehow both placed outside the frame condemning torture but also inside the frame witnessing torture. Not to show the victims in the performance is a way of pointing to our complicity and making us

444 Michael Taussig has forcefully argued that violence is always itself mimetic and re-enactive. In *The Nervous System* he examines how the state uses forces such as violence to consolidate its power. Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (London: Routledge, 1992).

see ourselves within the frame of the photos.[445] If this happens, the performance constructs a new frame that is not blinding but tries to reflect torture. Sontag's proposal about not showing the pain of others and Butler's request to thematise the forcible frame that restricts what is perceivable both followed me through the process. The reading of theory and analysis of *Love Story* have not determined my choice, but they have clearly influenced it. Thus, while writing about *Love Story*, I decided to work with reenactments through language, and reading theory I started questioning the strategy of copying the photos in performed reenactments and chose to work with the poses of the perpetrators.

In the performance Bugaj and I reenacted the gestures of the perpetrators, creeping into the exercise of power of the Western soldiers and prison guards. We wore khaki-coloured trousers, a green shirt, and boots combining the colours and material from a military environment and a private, homely context, suggesting that we were both active soldiers and passive spectators – or is it the other way around: passive soldiers and active spectators? We literally tried to copy how England holds her arms, how she has her arms around her boyfriend Graner, how she smiles to the camera, how she gives a thumbs-up, how she points to the prisoners, and how she relaxes in a prison cell. All these gestures appear only as corporeal traces, but together with the spoken descriptions of the photos they point back to the poses in the prison.

Trying to reenact these scenes of torture, I thought of Müller's strategy in *Description of a Picture*, which he describes as an "act of overpainting of one image by another, so that these images fade into each other".[446] The act of reenacting the photos could be seen in this way, as an overpainting, creating a filter through which we can bear to think about the original photos, a doubling that makes us remem-

445 There are several artistic examples of using the visibility and invisibility of bodies in order to place the spectator within the frame of the narrative. Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour masterpiece documentary *Shoah* (1985), about the Holocaust, does not show any footage from the Second World War but cuts between Lanzmann's interviews with survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators carried out in different Holocaust sites in Poland. Sometimes the camera dwells for minutes on a green field in Treblinka. The absence of the images of horror creates a space to imagine the worst thing possible: how could genocide happen here? How can genocide happen? Choreographer Arkadi Zaides's performance *Archive* (2014) is based on footage filmed by Palestinians in conflict areas in the West Bank. On stage he recreates the bodies of Israelis while the Palestinian bodies are absent hidden behind the cameras but nonetheless present in their clear framing of perspective. The power conflict in the West Bank is examined through the dynamic of absent and present bodies. See "Arcadi Zaide's *Archive*", accessed 14 January 2019, http://arkadizaides.com/archive. In the aforementioned *The Act of Killing* the perpetrators both perform themselves and the victims in their reenactments.

446 Sönke Hallmann, "The Time of Reading", *Image [&] Narrative* [e-journal] 18 (2007). Accessed 14 January 2019, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/hallmann.htm.

ber. The reenactments do not repeat the sense of shame like when we look at the photos. They do something else, they point at us, and let the performance of evil play out in our imagination.

Torture does not disappear. It endures, on a personal as well as a state level. The victims often have to retell a simplified script about the torture moment both when they seek asylum and when they get therapy later. The question is when and how the individual narrative of torture can be performed in its complexity. And by whom. Are there ethics of representation that might migrate against cross-gender or cross-race or cross-age casting? Or is such crossing productive, as in the example of cross-age casting discussed in *Love Story*. Can we do it on stage? And can we bear to look and listen? Stein writes that there is no such thing as repetition – but there is insistence.[447] I think we have to reenact and retell moments of violence, not as a repetition, but as an insistence on remembering.

> The cell is very small. The walls are grey. They are made of concrete. There is a window. But it is placed so high up that it is impossible to look out. Sometimes dust comes in the window. Outside the streets lead to the city and the tourist attractions. Perhaps the pyramids, perhaps the Holiday Inn with its bullet holes and bomb craters, perhaps the Great Wall or the Wailing Wall. It's incredibly far away. We are not saying anything about nationality. Or race. We are not saying anything about outsourced torture. We are just saying that it's far away from us.
>
> *This is for her*

It is time to gather the threads. It is time to consider how research-based performance uses fact, affect, and documentary strategies to represent research.

Next spread:
Figure 31, video still from projection from *This is for her*, 2017. Performance. © Søren Meisner.

447 Stein, "Portraits And Repetition", 290.

6.

Representing Research: Fact, Affect, Document

How does research-based performance represent research? Which modes and strategies are used to document the material? Does the research have a lasting and visible imprint on the performance? And does the extensive research from the process even have to be accessible in the performance or as a separate entity? In this chapter I will collect the insights of the present project in order to consider the different ways research-based performances work and how they create effective and affective thinking.

In the making of *Precarious Life* and *This is for her*, I conducted different sorts of research: I read theory, carried out interviews, consulted archival material, and used autobiographical writing. Throughout the process I was troubled about how to document the theoretical findings and the researched reality in the performances. I observed that I alternated between different modes of documenting research, sometimes focusing on *fact* and *theory* and sometimes on *affect* and *fabulation*. In *Precarious Life* I made the research and autobiographical writing completely visible in the performance. In *This is for her* I moved into a new (for me) way of using research, stepping into a half-fictive, half-documentary representation of reality. Both performances use documentary strategies in a clearly constructed representation of reality.

I came to think that the two performances represent two different modes of making research-based performance, instigating what I will for now call effective and affective thinking. In my view the first part of the project and the first performance work primarily with what I would call "effect" – I am not sure it is the best term, but it is the one I have at my disposal right now. Effect is a mode that reaches out to the spectator by means of factual knowledge, uses theory in a way where the original concept is decipherable (as Derrida's concept of autoimmunity in *Precarious Life*), and creates concepts in order to

instigate new spaces for thinking that cross over between the fields of philosophy, science, and art. The performance lecture is an obvious format for effective thinking, transgressing the boundaries between academia and art, and performance lectures appear close to my conceptualisation of research-based aesthetics. The effective thinking in *Precarious Life* is about representing research. In order to illustrate what is at stake in effective thinking I will here be using the terms "fact" and "fact-based strategies" to address an *effective* mode of representing research in an artwork.

I think that the second part of the project and the second performance work primarily with affect. With this I mean they work with fictitious documentary narratives, reenactments of truth, and affective strategies for thinking. The research is hidden rather than exposed, and the thinking takes place as a co-imagination between audience and performer.[448] In *This is for her* the research exists as traces in the performance. The performance appears as a surplus of the research and becomes itself a space of research taking place in the shared space between performer and audience.

In *This is for her* there is more affect and less fact, and in *Precarious Life* there is less affect and more fact. This does not mean that there is no affect in *Precarious Life*, that thinking is a finished business, or that there is a clear cause-and-effect mechanism between the performance and the effect on the audience after the performance. Both performances use fact and affect, and both performances represent a dual mode of working: a meeting between performance and research. So why risk making a distinction? Why risk complicating my concept of research-based aesthetics by proposing that research-based performances work very differently? I will take that risk because I need to gather the threads of this project. I am not trying to make a hard distinction between effective and affective thinking but I want to narrow down the operative differentiations between research-based artworks and propose that they, in different ways, unfold the promises of research-based aesthetics by creating spaces for thinking that does not only follow one protocol. Looking at my own practice and those of others, I have found that facts (effects) and affects can be traced through how research is represented and documented in the individual performance: in other words, in how research is turned

448 André Lepecki describes his practice as a dance theorist and dramaturge as "co-imagination"– a mode of imagining alongside the work of the artist. See André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance* (London: Routledge, 2006).

into performative documents.

Since my aim here is not only to understand my own practice but also to develop a meta-reflection on the representation of research in research-based art, I will analyse two research-based artworks that use affect, fact, and documentary strategies in very different ways: *77sqm_9:26min* (2017), by Forensic Architecture, and *Riding on a Cloud* (2013), by Rabih Mroué. The works are not "documentaries", but they use and produce documents in order to construct or reconstruct reality. The two works choose and frame research in different ways, and this is crucial: how the artist chooses to represent the research, how the research is mediated in the work, how the work is perceived, and where the work is shown all contribute to the making and perception of the artwork. In conclusion I will assess how different research-based artworks using fact-based and affective documentary strategies resonate with the urgency suggested in the title of this project: *Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis*.

Fact and Affect

Research-based art alternates between fact and fiction. Facts are produced, facts are reproduced, facts are challenged, facts are turned into fiction, and fiction is turned into facts. I use the term "fact" to discuss how artworks create thinking by using scientific methods in the artistic approach. I use the term "affect" to examine how artworks create thinking through other protocols than conscious knowing. This distinction is very raw, considering the theoretical, philosophical, and practical implications of the terms "affect" and "fact". Thus, I will seek to clarify how I understand the two terms in this contextual frame, demonstrating the relation between affect and affect theory, and how fact relates to science and philosophy.

The word "fact" changes its meaning depending on its context, and the way we understand it is influenced by its importance in science, philosophy, and a legal context. In science, facts are verified through experiment, measurement, or observation, producing empirical evidence. Facts are used to build scientific theories. In a legal context, facts refer to principles of jurisprudence and are used as evidence in the criminal procedure. In philosophy, facts are discussed in relation to truth and objectivity in the study of knowledge (epistemology) and in the study of being (ontolo-

gy).[449] In all these instances fact is considered in relation to truth.[450]

What do facts do? Can they create reality? Can they construct a reality for the spectator? Can they accumulate truth through an artwork? I think that what we have seen in the present project is that research-based artworks are capable of negotiating the performative power of facts: what are facts, what counts as facts, and which parts of reality can we actually access. Research-based aesthetics designate how artists have begun to explore facts in a way that falls outside the dominant channels of representation and responds to conflict and crisis in new ways. Using facts is a way to react as well as act. Our immediate understanding of facts is to perceive them as the opposite of fiction, a scientific approach to reality, a truthful representation of events in science, law, and journalism. Facts are effective, but sometimes they turn out to be fictions – as in fake news – and then they point to the fragility of a reliable truth.

There is not one theory of affect but rather an increased interest in affect in the social sciences and humanities.[451] Thus "the affective turn" designates how scholars since the mid-1990s have begun to use affect to examine how different bodily experiences, interactions, and encounters alter the political and social reality.[452] The word "affect" means to "have an effect on; make a difference to; touch the feelings of; move emotionally".[453] In my understanding of "affect" I will focus on the ability to affect and be affected. This is closely linked to Deleuze

449 For an excellent overview of the philosophical discussion of fact, truth, and objectivity see *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Facts", accessed 14 January 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/facts/.

450 This is interesting in relation to contemporary politics where "fake facts" circulate. In the present political environment, facts are becoming fiction. An example of the performative use of "fact" is US secretary of state Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations security council about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction: "What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence. […] Ladies and gentlemen, these are not assertions. These are facts. […] This is evidence, not conjecture. This is true. This is all well-documented." Later it was proven that there were indeed no solid facts or evidence to support the idea that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which legitimised the invasion of Iraq. See "Full Text of Colin Powell's Speech", The Guardian, 5 February 2003, accessed 14 January 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/05/iraq.usa. I thank Frederik Tygstrup for making me aware of the interconnected relations between fiction, fact, and indedexicality in Colin Powell's speech.

451 Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 5. One of the founders of affect theory is psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins, who from the 1960s on developed a theoretical framework with nine affects: interest/excitement, enjoyment/joy, surprise/startle, distress/anguish, anger/rage, fear/terror, shame/humiliation, "dissmell" and disgust. See Silvan S. Tomkins, *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins*, ed. by Virginia Demos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). In 1995 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank took up Tomkins's work to discuss its relevance for theory today, such as queer theory. Their essay is now an important strand in contemporary affect theory. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins", *Critical Inquiry* 21:2 (1995), 496–522.

452 Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

453 *Oxford Dictionaries*, "affect", accessed 14 January 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/affect.

and Guattari's perception of affect, which has been identified by philosopher Brian Massumi as "a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act".[454] I will follow this thought and see affect as a potential for change: a body's capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is both an intentional strategy and something that is always already here, floating, increasing the body's sensitivity to the world. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth formulate it: "affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body [...] in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds."[455] Affective strategies have the capacity to touch the sensibility of the spectators, to move them, to mobilise them, and also to make them think. Gregg and Seigworth argue that affect and cognition cannot be separated because thinking is embodied.[456] They refer to Freud, who connected passages of affect with movements of thought: "affect does not so much reflect or think; affect acts."[457] Here I will pursue this thought, arguing that affect can lead us to acts of thinking, that affect moves us to thought.

Document Desire

How is research documented in the artwork? In the following, I will use documentary film theory to identify different documentary modes, which can be found in research-based art. As touched on in Chapter 1, the vexed question of what constitutes a documentary has unfolded simultaneously with the development of the genre. According to film theorist Paul Ward, the central question is the relationship between reality and artifice:

> how to deal with and understand something that quite clearly is attempting to represent reality (or some part of reality), but as it does so, uses specific aesthetic devices. A commonsense suggestion is that the aesthetics somehow *distort* or *change* the reality being represented.[458]

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454 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.* Importantly, Massumi is also the author of "The Autonomy of Affect", in which he discusses the relation between affect and economics in society. See Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect", *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995), 83–109.

455 Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 1.

456 Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 2–3.

457 Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 2. They refer to Sigmund Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (London: Hogarth, 1966), 357–9.

458 Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 6.

This distortion or changing of reality plays an important role in many research-based artworks that use specific aesthetic devices to represent some part of reality. Bill Nichols identifies six different documentary modes: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative.[459] I find these modes helpful in order to define documentary strategies in research-based art.[460]

The poetic mode shares features with the modernist avant-garde and represents reality using fragments, subjective impressions, and loose associations.[461] Poetic documentaries use material from the real world but transform the material in different ways, accentuating form, tone, and affect in order to make a poetic framing of the world. This way the poetic mode makes room for alternative forms of knowledge compared to the straightforward transfer of information in many documentaries.[462] *The expository mode* emphasises objectivity and gives a well-supported, informative perspective of the world. It combines classical elements of the documentary film: indexical images, storytelling, and rhetorical persuasiveness. Nichols highlights the advantages and disadvantages of the expository mode: namely, that it will add to our knowledge "but not challenge or subvert the categories that organize and legitimate such knowledge".[463] *The observational mode* may best be illustrated by the supposedly neutral "fly-on-the-wall" technique. The camera observes reality, engaging with everyday life, supposedly without interfering or shaping the events that take place.[464] *The participatory mode* emphasises the interaction between filmmaker and subject. It is often carried out through interviews, stressing the active exchange between people. Thus, the participatory mode uses strategies found in anthropology, sociology, and therapy, often using historical footage. *The reflexive mode* points to how the film openly demonstrates its

459 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 179. Nichols had already described four modes in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991) and five modes in *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

460 Nichols argues that documentaries are about reality, real people, and they tell stories about what happens in the real world. Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 7–14. Research-based artworks do not necessarily aim at making narratives about the real world, but they do use documentary strategies in their representation of research.

461 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 164.

462 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 162.

463 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 170.

464 The fly-on-the-wall documentary technique means that the filmmaker interferes as little as possible and lets the camera register the events that take place. It is a method used in *cinéma vérité*, direct cinema, and observational cinema. The form contains an inherent paradox since the camera is meant to be observing while at the same time it inevitably affects the reality it registers. I find it difficult to imagine a "fly-on-the-wall" technique on stage except for immersive performances where the audience can either be a fly on the wall or an active participant.

constructed representation of reality.[465] The film may unfold political reflexivity, complicating the understanding of a given social structure. Finally, *the performative mode* seeks to demonstrate that our knowledge of the world depends on its subjective and affective dimensions. Performative documentaries do not strive for objective or factual accuracy but use emotions and affect to impact the audience. The mode has elements of the experimental, personal, and avant-garde.

Nichols's categorisation of documentary modes has been criticised by theorist Stella Bruzzi for constructing an exclusive evolutionary history of documentary.[466] She proposes that there is a dialectical relationship between different modes and that documentary can be seen as a negotiation between filmmaker and reality.[467] While I agree with Bruzzi that Nichols's categories do not allow for the complexity of documentary, I do find the modes useful for designating documentary strategies in research-based artworks as long as one is conscious of the reductionist gesture in this act.[468] But we may also use Bruzzi's argument to think about the interaction between different modes and the performative dimension of documentary. In relation to research-based art I am interested in the negotiation between performance, audience, and viewing context. An important element is whether the audience perceive the artwork as documentary. Theorist Dai Vaughn describes the audience's reaction as the "documentary response", which means that documentary is not primarily a style or genre but rather a mode of response to filmmaking.[469] Likewise we may address a "research-based response" in relation to research-based artworks. The audience responds to the artwork as research-based, and this response affect the experience in conjunction with the viewing context. The viewing context is here to be understood as the social, architectural/spatial, and political framing of the work.

Research-based artworks use documentary strategies without claiming documentary reference to reality. They use documents and facts but are not documents in a legal sense (although this will be questioned when we look at the work of Forensic Architecture). Re-

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465 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 199.

466 Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). See also Toni De Bromhead, who argues that Nichols focuses too much on rational discourse. Toni De Bromhead, *Looking Two Ways: Documentary Film's Relationship with Reality and Cinema* (Højbjerg: Intervention Press, 1996).

467 Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, 154.

468 Nichols also takes this precaution. See Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 147.

469 Dai Vaughn, *For Documentary: Twelve Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 58.

search-based artworks are documents of a researched reality. They blur and exceed the boundaries between different documentary modes. They make an objective and subjective link between research and representation, reality, and artifice. Whereas Nichols's modes can be used to describe the formal documentary qualities and Bruzzi's critique makes us aware of the contextual frames, my understanding of fact and affect refers to the representation and dissemination of thinking in the artwork.

All research-based artworks contain facts and affects, but they use them in different degrees. In some works the research is exposed in a clear manner while in others the research is more hidden. We may think of a "research-scale" that has affect at one end of the scale and fact at the other, and that research-based artworks can be placed at different points along this scale.

In the following I will examine how facts and affect unfold in the work of Forensic Architecture and Mroué. Both produce work that is research-based, they reflect on crises in a contemporary context, and they both have a clear description of how they want to relate to reality, but they do so in very different ways. I will analyse how they transform research into the artwork, with an example from each practice, and use the two examples to point out ways of working that can be traced in other research-based art practices. Forensic Architecture represents the fact-based end of the research scale; the group works through a fact-based protocol. Mroué represents the affective end of the scale; he works through affects. What is important to underline is that fact is *not* an opposition to affect. Affect is present in the work of Forensic Architecture, and facts are present in the work of Mroué. The question is how these two artworks represent research through affective and fact-based documentary strategies.

Forensic Architecture

Forensic Architecture (referred to below as FA) is a research agency based at Goldsmiths University of London, consisting of architects, artists, filmmakers, and theorists who work with forensic and aesthetic modes of investigation. They analyse political processes and their consequences, and at the same time they critically examine the knowledge production pertaining to contemporary forensic practices.[470] FA presents research in various political and legal contexts but

470 Forensic science refers to the use of scientific methods and processes in crime-solving. Forensic scientists collect, preserve, and analyse scientific evidence during the course of an investigation.

also in art venues. As argued by the director of FA, Eyal Weizman, the *forensic turn* gives space to material investigation,[471] and a new "forensic sensibility" has come into being in the formulation of public truth.[472] Whereas the focus used to be on the witness – the subject – there is now an increased focus on the materiality of non-human objects, of "giving a voice to things".[473] The aim is to impact the legal and political implications of state violence, armed conflict, and climate change: "Transformative politics must begin with material issues."[474] The forensic turn is not necessarily to be seen as the opposite of the affective turn; the two approaches have a common interest in materiality, but the forensic approach is characterised by its scientific and sensible approach to matter.

As mentioned above, FA consists of a big research team, it is situated within an academic context and it considers the tension between practice and critique as a productive resource in the research process. The work is framed as objective research both on the team's website and in each of the research-projects, including the artworks. The scenography of the web page underlines their scientific approach by presenting the work under the heading "Investigations" rather than "Projects", and the research conducted for each project is accessible as information for the public. At the same time the investigations are presented in a highly aestheticised fashion, and the research has an aesthetic sensibility, as when the research team in *Saydnaya: Inside a Syrian Torture Prison* (2016) re-creates the experience and the architecture of the prison through the memories of survivors focusing on time, smell, and bodily sensations.[475] When looking at the work and the presentation of the work, the lines between academic, forensic, and artistic strategies become blurred.

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471 Eyal Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis", in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 10.

472 Eyal Weizman, "Forensic Architecture: Notes from Fields and Forums", *100 Notes - 100 Thoughts, No 062*, dOCUMENTA 13 (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 6.

473 Weizman, "Forensic Architecture", 9. An example is the field of war crime investigation, where there has been a methodological shift from a focus on the "subjective and linguistic dimension of testimony" to "an object-oriented juridical culture immersed in matter and materialities, in code and form, and in the presentation of scientific investigations by experts". Weizman, "Forensic Architecture", 5–6.

474 Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis", 11. Elaborated here: "An important component in our ability to respond to political challenges is the capacity of forensis to move beyond detecting, calculating, processing, and presenting acts of injustice. Achieving a heightened aesthetic state of material sensitivity, tuned to weak signals, must be enhanced by a sensitivity to the materiality of politics: this entails an appreciation that whether you are a building, a territory, a pixel, or a person, to detect is to transform, and to be transformed is to feel pain." Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis", 30.

475 See Forensic Architecture, "Saydnaya", accessed 14 January 2019, https://saydnaya.amnesty.org.

77sqm_9:26min

I watched *77sqm_9:26min* at the very political Documenta 14 (2017). The project was presented as "counter-investigating the testimony of Andreas Temme in relation to the racially motivated murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel, April 6, 2006" and consisted of a video and a report shown as part of the installation *The Society of Friends of Halit*, which included five other documentations related to the murder.[476] The installation sought to situate the murder within the history of racist violence in German society and used the term "NSU [i.e., National Socialist Underground] Complex" to refer to the combination of neo-Nazi terror and institutional and structural racism. Although not as comprehensive as other investigations by Forensic Architecture, this project displays the working methods and modes of representation of the agency.[477]

On the website it says that the work was commissioned by the Unravelling the NSU Complex' people's tribunal, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) initiative, 6 April, and Documenta 14. The video, however, only says that the project was commissioned by Unravelling the NSU Complex' people's tribunal, thus emphasising the importance of the project in the formulation of public truth. In the following I will focus on the video. It is introduced by a neutral male voice:

> Shortly after 5 pm on the 6th of April 2006 Halit Yozgat was found dead behind the counter of his family-run Internet café in Kassel, Germany. This was the ninth in a series of ten killings targeting mainly migrant communities across Germany between 2000 and 2007.[478]

The intelligence agent Temme was present in the shop at the time of the murder; he did not report this to the police, but was later identified from his Internet records. In his interrogation and in the

476 The installation includes: *Kein 10. Opfer!* (2006), courtesy Sefa Defterli and other unknown individuals; *77sqm_9:26min – Report* (2017); *77sqm_9:26min – Video* (2017), courtesy Forensic Architecture, London. Sequences – Memory – Change (2017); *Conversations/Assemblage – The NSU Complex in Context, with Heike Kleffner*; *Conversations/Assemblage – The NSU Complex in Context, with Osman Tasköprü*, courtesy spot_the_silence, Berlin; Tribunal "Unravelling the NSU Complex!" courtesy tribunal-spots.net. All works Neue Neue Galerie, Kassel. "The Society of Friends of Halit", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.documenta14.de/en/public-programs/22411/the-society-of-friends-of-halit. To see the video and report: "Forensic Architecture", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/77sqm_926min/.

477 The team for this project consists of Eyal Weizman, Christina Varvia, Stefanos Levidis, Omar Ferwati, Simone Rowat, Nicholas Masterton, Yamen Albadin, Ortrun Bargholz, Eeva Sarlin, Franc Camps-Febrer, Hana Rizvanolli, Sarah Nankivell, Chris Cobb Smith, and Lawrence abu Hamdan.

478 FA, *77sqm_9:26min*, 00:14-00:43.

following NSU trial in Munich, he denied being a witness to the incident, and the court accepted his testimony. FA sets out to investigate Temme's testimony, beginning with some clear research questions: "What time did the murder happen? Where was Temme at that time? Could he not have witnessed the incident? Could Temme's testimony and reenactment be truthful? If not, larger questions could be asked."[479] The last sentence is a cliffhanger that keeps us in suspense until the end of the video, although the voice indicates that Temme is probably not telling the truth.

In 2015 many of the records documenting the investigation were leaked, among them a police video showing Temme reenacting his visit to the Internet café. FA constructs a full-scale mock-up at the HKW in Berlin and tries out different possible scenarios with the help of experts from different fields in order to reconstruct the crime. Not surprisingly, the research team finds out that the scenario described by Temme cannot be true and that he either witnessed the murder or colluded with the killer. The voice concludes: "This story suggests layers of violence, misrepresentations, and cover-ups. [...] We reenacted Temme's reenactment to discover if it was yet another act of violence, potentially a crime in its own right."[480] During this text we see Temme's reenactment superimposed on the body of the actor's reenactment, demonstrating the accuracy of the experiment.

The video *77sqm_9:26min* represents what Nichols would call the expository mode. Both the text and the visual side of the video emphasise objectivity and give an informative perspective supported by experiments used to reenact the crime. These experiments are conducted with the collaboration of experts and are clearly framed as scientific.[481] The video contains indexical images that illustrate the argument. The commentary voice is neutral, perhaps even synthetic, but the video clearly wants to tell us something – to make us see the case as an example of the violations of people's rights. Moreover, it is not as objective as it claims: it clearly suggests that Temme is guilty. One example comes at the beginning, where there is a cut from photos of the three NSU leaders to a photo of Temme, suggesting that

479 FA, *77sqm_9:26min*, 02:17-02:36. The questions are expanded in the written report.

480 FA, *77sqm_9:26min*, 25:09-26:09.

481 The following experts are mentioned: 1) Anderson Acoustics, a consultancy specialising in building, environmental and aviation acoustics; 2) Armament Research Services (ARES), a highly specialised firearms consultancy; 3) Salvador Navarro-Martinez, Senior Lecturer at Imperial College, who designed the algorithm that traced and visualised the movement of chemical particles in space. Forensic Architecture, *77sqm_9.26min Report*, 10.

Figure 32, Forensic Architecture, stills from *77sqm_9:26min*, 2017. Video installation. © Forensic Architecture.

there is a link.[482] *77sqm_9:26min* presents a forceful argument, but at times it seems didactic in its formulation of truth, as when the shop is described as "a microcosm for the larger political controversy that ensued".[483]

Apparently, the video does not use the other documentary modes described by Nichols. It is not a subjective, associative representation of reality (poetic mode). It does not contain interviews (participatory mode). It does not reflect on its own representation (reflexive mode). And it does not point to the subjective and affective dimensions of knowledge (performative mode). The video leaves out many possible narratives in order to secure objectivity. But the way it affects the audience is more complex because layers of fact and affect interchange constantly. And in this move from how the work initially appears to how it actually works in the artistic context with an art audience I think we confront the performative power of facts discussed earlier. Perhaps the work can be perceived as reflexive and performative, even if it works primarily with forensics: the work appears reflexive when it points to its constructed representation of reality using forensic procedures in a way that both mimes and problematises the operative political tools of crime solving. And the work has traits of the performative mode when it, by means of the aesthetic, forensic

482 FA, *77sqm_9:26min*, 00:55-01:15.

483 FA, *77sqm_9:26min*, 03:05-03:12.

Figure 33, Forensic Architecture, stills from *77sqm_9:26min*, 2017. Video installation. © Forensic Architecture.

reconstruction of the crime, seeks to access a material sensitivity that can affect our political understanding. This way I think the work can be seen as an example of how research-based art opens a whole new way of looking at fact and affect in the documentation of research.

If we are to understand why research-based art that uses facts extensively can be understood, perceived, and discussed as art, it is crucial to look at the framing and context of the work and the interaction between fact and affect in the work. In *77sqm_9.26min* the spatial and architectural reenactment is used to conduct scientific experiments, but it also has a high aesthetic value; it is both an art installation and a field of investigation. It underlines the shortcomings of the police investigations, and at the same time it transforms the crime scene into an art object.[484]

484 Imagine if the police made full-scale mock-ups of crime scenes. Then we would have cities of crime scenes to be used for filmmaking, amusement parks, or museums for public education. They could be understood like heterotopias, as Foucault described the parallel sites in our society. They would be real and unreal at the same time. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", *Diacritics* 16:1 (1986), 22–7. A heterotopia is a physical representation of a utopia, or a parallel space. An example would be Mini Hollywood, a Western-style theme park in the Spanish desert. It was originally built for Sergio Leone's movies, but is now used as a tourist attraction blending reality and fiction on several levels, like in the HBO series *Westworld* (2016).

There are other aesthetic modes of representation in the video, such as the timelines and the graphic layering of elements in the physical reenactments. When illustrating the leaks from the police investigation, we see documents accumulating on the screen. This mapping of documents is a strategy claiming objectivity, but it also produces a material sensibility towards the layering of documents, moving us to see the structure of institutional power. Interestingly, the Atlas Group, discussed earlier, use a similar aesthetics in the archive of produced documents, which are what I would call "memory artefacts". FA unfolds a political reflexivity through facts. The Atlas Group unfolds a political reflexivity through fabricated facts.

Marcel Duchamp asked: "Can one make works that are not works of art?"[485] And we may answer that it is difficult *not* to see *77sqm_9:26min* as a work of art exhibited at Documenta. Clearly, the viewing context and labelling of an artwork affect how it is perceived. *77sqm_9:26min* creates other layers of thinking owing to its presentation in an artistic context and because of the way it is formulated. It is interesting as art because it works against art: it claims truth, it is situated within an academic and artistic context, and it has not one sender but a group of researchers; it challenges the division between research and art.

77sqm_9:26min represents violence through material documentation, and the investigators are stand-ins for our bodies in the process. The work's documentary materiality and the performative use of facts are capable of increasing the body's sensitivity to the world: the documentary materiality produces affect. On the web page the project is shown both under the heading "reenactment" and under the heading "testimony". If we accept this double description, we may say that FA both reenacts a crime and testifies to a crime and that we as an audience testify to the reenactment of a reenactment. Evidence is put to use to construct a narrative of reality, both as an artwork and as documentation. FA may not work with affect as a strategy, but the works produce affect. Referring back to Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between art that creates affects and percepts and science that works with functions,[486] I would suggest that FA is located somewhere in between the two, using both art and science to produce both affects and functions. The dynamic

485 Marcel Duchamp, *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp, Marchand du Sel / Salt Seller*, ed. by Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 74.

486 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* See Chapter 3.

exchange between research and art arises in the crossover between the two, when research becomes art and art becomes research.

Rabih Mroué

Mroué makes theatre, visual art, and performance lectures – or "non-academic lectures", as he calls them.[487] In many of his works he uses found documents, video footage, photographs, and objects to explore the relationship between fact and fiction and the authority of archival documents.[488] He often focuses on the civil war in Lebanon and its aftermath, and questions how narratives are constructed to represent history both on a personal and political level.[489] In his practice the individual, the psychological, and the affective interact with historical and political crises. He describes memory as a violent act because it is selective.[490] Like FA, he is interested in discovering other representations of reality, but he is not trying to create archives of real evidence: "it doesn't matter whether it is fact or fiction", he states.[491] This is clear in the performance *Riding on a Cloud* (2013), which stages the conflict between fact and fiction, between objectivity and subjectivity.[492]

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487 For more about Mroué's approach to his non-academic lectures see Daniela. Hahn, "'Thinking With an Audience:' Dissecting What Is To Be Remembered and Forgotten", *Maska* 30: 172–174 (2015), 133.

488 Mroué discussed this in an artist's talk that I moderated in relation to his staging of *Riding on a Cloud*. Sofie Lebech, "Rabih Mroué on *Riding on a Cloud*", Sort/Hvid, Copenhagen, 30 May 2018. For more, see Hahn, "Thinking with an Audience", 134.

489 See Philip Bither, "Internal Revolution", *Walker* (10 January 2012), accessed 14 January 2019, https://walkerart.org/magazine/internal-revolution. See also Cis Bierinckx, "Reconstructing Fragments: Rabih Mroué on *Riding on a Cloud*", *Walker* (18 January 2016), https://walkerart.org/magazine/rabih-mroue-yasser-cis-bierinckx.

490 See Göksu Kunak, "Theater of the Present", *Ibraaz* (May 2015), accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/167.

491 "Rabih Mroué in Conversation with Philip Bither, 13 January 2012, Walker Art Center", accessed 14 January 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYXxPIh7zPo, 53:00.

492 In works such as *How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's Joke* (2007) truth appears as a fiction. Four performers sit on a couch telling their experiences from the beginning of the civil war in 1975 to January 2007, when street-level sectarian conflict briefly returned to Beirut. This is a fact, of course, but the recounted narratives contain unexplainable events such as when a martyr dies and continues living a few days after. For more about the performance see Jim Quilty, "How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's Joke", *Bidoun* 13 (2007), accessed 14 January 2019, https://bidoun.org/articles/how-nancy-wished-that-everything-was-an-april-fool-s-joke. See also Solveig Gade, "Learning to Live with Ghosts in the Aftermath of War: On Documentary Strategies in Rabih Mroué's *How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's Joke*", *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 8:4 (2016), 328–46.

Figure 34, Rabih Mroué, *Riding on a Cloud*, 2013. Performance. © Sommerszene Salzburg/ Bernard Müller.

Riding on a Cloud

> The memories in my head are like still pictures. There are no scenes from the past. […] Most of the time, I don't understand the connection between a picture and the one next to it. I need someone who knows me well to tell me about it. In other words, I need someone to set the picture in motion, so it's not still any more.
>
> *Riding on a Cloud*[493]

Riding on a Cloud constructs a biography of Yasser, Mroué's younger brother, who survived a sniper's bullet in Beirut in 1987. The text above opens the performance as a projection introducing Yasser and his need to transform the still images of the past into a continuous memory. It soon becomes clear that memory cannot be constructed as a coherent narrative but emerges between the individual account,

493 Mroué, *Riding on a Cloud*, unpublished script. It is the opening spoken text of the performance.

the historical and political context, and the dialectical relationship between fact and fiction. This way the performance becomes a tale, not only of Yasser, but also of a family and a political moment in time. Yasser reconstructs and recaptures the past through photos, videos, poems, music, and recordings. In a joining together of the historical reality with his personal story, he states that there is a before and after for every minor and major event: as there is a before and after the Arab Spring, so there is a before and after his injury.[494] After the injury he is aphasic, his language is broken, and he does not remember; his story becomes a mirror of historical crisis and collective amnesia. He has to learn language again, he has to learn about representation, and he becomes a poet and a video-maker.

The performance is clearly framed as a representation. At the beginning the projected text says that Yasser is both himself and a fictitious character. At the end of the performance there is a written conversation between him and Mroué, in which Mroué suggests that they are going to invent the story that we have just seen. Why is it so important to underline that the story is invented, and that Yasser is performing a role created for him?[495] I would argue that the performance would not have the same effect and affect were it not Yasser and Mroué on stage. The performance is not more real, but it affects the audience in a different way. The audience is aware that they are not only actors but also real brothers. This is underlined in the programme text, and the performance constantly refers to reality. Yasser is acting the constructed story about himself. Despite the attempts to show that the performance is a fiction, it appears as a poetic documentation of reality because of the use of documents: the photos, the videos, and the presence of Yasser on stage. His body becomes a document of a lived reality.

In *Riding on a Cloud* documents create the story and affect the audience. In a judicial context, documents are used as evidence of a truth or fact and the performance plays with this connotation using both personal and historical documents. There is a record sheet from Yasser's kindergarten, which has indexical and affective value. There are poetic videos produced as documents for the performance, such as the video of his distorted hand on a wooden surface which dis-

494 Mroué, *Riding on a Cloud*, 00:26:47-00:28:50.

495 Mroué has even proposed that an actor could perform the role of his brother and the role of himself when he appears on stage in the end. Lebech, "Rabih Mroué on *Riding on a Cloud*". See also Bierinckx, "Reconstructing Fragments". In this interview, Mroué underlines the fact that *Riding on a Cloud* is a theatre piece and not a documentary.

solves so that the two pictures become one. And there are documents produced on stage, such as when Yasser records his voice and plays it as a spoken document in time. In addition, Yasser wants to find the building where the sniper shot him. He wants to reenact the crime – that is, he wants to imagine how it took place, how he fell, and how he was dragged away. He looks for the actual street but at the same time he makes an imagined re-construction of a crime. This example demonstrates the poetic and fictive quality of the document in the performance. It is not forensics but a subjective testimony built on his memory of the event. There are many versions of truth. Perhaps the only tangible reality is the one that takes place on stage.

In an interview about the performance Mroué has said: "So in the end, it's not a biography of Yasser. It's not a biography of his family or my family, at all. It doesn't tell a story of a life of someone. It takes fragments and tries to build up some questions, some ideas around these fragments."[496] Yes, but the way to get to this fragmented narrative is through research on the biography of Yasser: the shooting, the family, the situation in the country, the events in Russia, where Yasser had his operation, the picking and choosing of songs, and the making of archival material. The performance constructs a document between the person Yasser, the one that he acts out on stage, and the Yasser that watches the representation. It is the shifting between fact and affect that makes the audience reflect. The representation of a lived reality is always double: real and fictive at the same time. The archive of Yasser points to other embodied archives. This archive produces affect that increases the audience's sensitivity to the world.

Riding on a Cloud exposes several of Nichols's documentary modes: in fact, four of the modes that were not exposed in *77sqm_9:26min*.[497] The fragmented, associative structure of the performance resembles the poetic mode. The interaction between Mroué and Yasser can be described as a participatory mode. The meta-level, constantly reminding the audience that the performance is a representation, is a reflexive mode. And the use of emotions and affect links the performance to the performative mode. Mroué says that his work is not documentary or semi-documentary.[498] Nonetheless, he uses several strategies that can be interpreted as documentary and which in this way affect

496 Bierinckx, "Reconstructing Fragments".

497 Neither Mroué nor Forensic Architecture uses the observational mode. In regards to *77sqm_9:26min* the aim is to re-create an event of the past, not to document events as they unfold in the present.

498 See Hahn, "Thinking With an Audience", 137.

the perception of the artwork.

Mroué proposes that documentary is just a style.[499] An artwork can look like documentary while working with constructed documents. Here we may recapture Vaughn's argument that documentary is not primarily a style but rather a mode of response. I would argue that documentary is both a style and a response. *Riding on a Cloud* needs the convention of documentary modes in order to make constructed documents that affect the audience. It may be characteristic of a work situated at the affective end of the scale that it uses several documentary modes to add a subjective "non-documentary" layer to the work. That is, it produces non-factual documents, not as "fake facts", but rather as affective facts that we are indeed invited to decode as untrue facts. In the space, which the audience and work share, the documents appear real even if they are presented in a poetic, performative, or reflexive mode.

(Re)constructing Reality through Affective and Fact-Based Documentary Strategies

I have analysed artistic strategies and forms of representation in *77sqm_9:26min* and *Riding on a Cloud*. The two artworks both focus on a shooting, both compare the individual story to a larger story (the NSU complex and the Lebanese Civil War), both try to reenact a crime scene, both have a political relation to reality, and both use documentary strategies. But whereas FA is situated at the fact-based end of the research scale, Mroué works at the affect-based end of the scale; he uses affect to create an individual space for reflection. The effect and affect of a research-based artwork depend on how it stages documents, knowledge, and artistic strategies.[500] FA and Mroué employ two different modes of representing research: they make different choices, they work within different frames, their perspectives on reality are different, and they sample their material in different ways.

FA is situated within an academic context, which implies that their research should be taken seriously. Mroué, on the other hand, underlines the fact that he is not an academic (as when he calls his

499 Lebech, "Rabih Mroué on *Riding on a Cloud*".

500 Literary scholar Marjorie Perloff has argued that when it comes to conceptual literature and conceptual art, what matters are choice, framing, perspective, and sampling: "these are what transform the 'ordinary' into something else. The same applies to research-based art, in which the re-staging and composition of information, knowledge, and artistic strategies form each artwork." Quoted from the lecture "The Conceptualist Turn: Wittgenstein and the New Writing", University of Copenhagen, 7 December 2015, unpublished lecture, 8. The lecture has not been published, but Perloff has provided me with the written paper.

performance lectures "non-academic lectures") and thereby points to the artistic dimension of his work. In *Riding on a Cloud*, Mroué uses fictive documents as an opposition to the claim to objective truth, in order to make the audience construct their own image of reality. The work clearly produces affect in the artistic enunciation, and even if Mroué emphasises that his work is not activism or political theatre,[501] I would argue that it affects the audience and that this affect has a political dimension. In *77sqm_9:26min min* FA uses an expository mode to scrutinise the political and legal justice of a murder. The work claims to present a truthful account of a real incident without providing evidence to the police. The work does not leave much room for interpretation, but it may change the audience's perspective on societal structures. In this sense FA performs an activist gesture directing attention to the problems in the legal processes and calling for an open investigation.[502]

I began this chapter by suggesting that I wanted to analyse which modes and strategies are used to document the researched material in research-based artworks. I have demonstrated that the research is present as such in the artwork although intentionally more visible in works situated at the fact-based end of the research scale. Through the analyses I have sought to reveal how different documentary modes can be traced in the artworks as a means to reflect the researched reality, or even more, as a way to document, construct, or reconstruct reality. Here a critical voice may insert that my perception of how research-based art relates to reality appears contradictory. On the one hand I have questioned the indexicality of the document throughout the dissertation when it comes both to the autobiographical writing in *Precarious Life* and to the reenactment of photos and retelling of interviews in *This is for her*. On the other hand I have argued that research-based art applies research to respond to real conflict and crisis. However, I perceive this not as a contradiction but rather as a dialectical relationship between fact and fiction in research-based art. So I find it necessary to conclude with the following question: what reference to reality is left when the document cannot be trusted in research-based artworks?

The answer may be found in between a constructivist and realist understanding of documentary. As Hito Steyerl writes in "Documen-

501 Bither, "Internal Revolution".

502 Interestingly, Weizman mentions Mroué's *The Pixelated Revolution* (2012) as an example of how to investigate new technologies used in contemporary activism. See Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis", 31, footnote 10.

tary Uncertainty", both positions are problematic. The realists believe in an objective reproduction of natural facts, which is naive. The constructivists believe "truth" is constructed as a function of power, which as a consequence means that they become relativistic and cynical. However, the quality of contemporary documentary is exactly that we doubt its credibility.[503] In relation to the works discussed here, it is clear that the organisation of material and the approach to objective truth are important. The layers of fact, affect, and documentary strategies produce a documentary uncertainty that is neither realist nor constructivist but which is instead a self-conscious reflection on reality as an archive of factual, affective, and fictitious material. Steyerl points to a contradiction within contemporary artistic documentaries, which at the level of content are critical towards unfair power structures but which at the formal level reproduce authoritative truth procedures known from the courtroom or the laboratory as forensic science. FA mimes the truth procedures of legal authorities, but I would argue that the critical dimension of its work arises out of this very reproduction, which points to the blind spots of legal truth procedures. It is critical by mirroring fact-based strategies in contemporary society. Mroué's work also has a critical dimension, but in contrast to FA, the criticality arises from using affect to question fact.

Steyerl emphasises that documentary plays an important role in contemporary affective economies because it intensifies a general feeling of fear. Documentary reports can provoke military interventions, mass panic, or euphoria, even though we know that the documentary is not true, real, or factual. When we look at hand-held mobile phone pictures from war zones on CNN, we can barely see anything but pixelated colours from the region. The closer we get to reality, the less intelligible it becomes. This uncertainty principle of modern documentarism is in fact a reflection of political reality: "Those CNN images [...] reflect the precarious nature of contemporary lives as well as the uneasiness of any representation."[504] Research-based artworks that use documentary strategies test and challenge this uncertainty principle. They testify to contemporary conflict and crisis from within the trouble, and they use fact and affect to create alternative spaces for reflection. The works discussed in this project present truth with an uncertainty that is neither objective nor purely constructed. They refer to a reality, but how they understand it or respond to it is a

503 Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty".

504 Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty".

matter of choice and framing. How does the body become a political body? The body becomes a political body through the ability to act and be acted upon. This happens in research-based artworks that represent research with fact-based and affective documentary strategies. And this is what I at this point consider to be research-based aesthetics.

Fact and Affect/Choices and Frames in *Precarious Life* and *This is for her*

Based on how I use documentary strategies and how I stage fact and affect, I would argue that my practice is situated at the affective end of the research scale. I use different documentary modes. The poetic mode appears in the way I write and perform from a subjective perspective. I use the expository mode as a strategy in the lecture parts of *Precarious Life*, such as when I reenact a doctor's description of the immune system. I have used the participatory mode extensively, in carrying out interviews with people and in my gathering of material from personal archives.[505] In both my performances the reflexive mode plays out from the outset, where the representational character of theatre is revealed. Even in *Precarious Life*, where I am supposedly performing myself, I appear as a representation of myself. I use facts, but I use them through fictive, affective layers, showing that they are performed facts to be interpreted by the audience.

This is for her and *Precarious Life* are both framed as research-based performances. It is clear, both in text and staging, that the works make a selective representation of different researched material. Further, the context – the where and when of the performance context – affects how the audience encounters the performance. *This is for her* was performed in a black box for a theatre audience. *Precarious Life* was performed in an operation theatre, complicating the balance between lecture and performance. Choice is important at several levels. Writing the scripts, I had to select which statements and sections I wanted to use from the interviews and the researched material. Staging the texts, I had to decide which artistic strategies would accommodate the research. I chose to focus on challenges in contemporary society: terror, autoimmunity, torture, and therapy. I sought to be objective in my use of theory, interviews, and archival material, but at the same

505 Importantly, I do not make anthropological theatre, which can be traced back to the 1960s and '70s. Examples are Richard Schechner, Peter Brook, and Eugenio Barba (Odin Theatre), who have travelled to different cultures in order to encounter and learn other modes of representation.

time I worked from a personal, subjective perspective. These choices had an effect on the aesthetic and reflective level of the performance.

An important dimension of the representation of the research is the way in which I stage and re-stage quotes under new circumstances. "Staging" means that the quote keeps its original form while "re-staging" means that the quote is changed from the original. In *Precarious Life* I stage and re-stage quotes from, for example, Derrida and Sontag. In *This is for her* I stage and re-stage quotes from victims, therapists, and researchers that I have interviewed.[506] I have become aware that my artistic process is highly engaged with the forms, concepts, and content of pre-existing artworks. I use these artworks to develop my own work, and they live as visible and invisible residues in the two performances. Research is conceptualised and documented differently in each performance, which makes it important to look at the format in which the researched material is presented. Taking *This is for her* as an example, I use formats as testimony, reenactment, therapy, and poetic appropriations. I give a new format to the researched narratives. I do not claim that these narratives represent truth – that would demand far more fieldwork. I examine how the narratives can be represented in a performance.

Perspectives: Using Artistic Research to Examine Research-Based Performance

I have used artistic research both to formulate the concept of research-based aesthetics and to create two research-based performances. My approach has been to reflect on research-based performance through an artistic and theoretical practice. Since I wanted to focus on the relationality between art and research, this seemed to be the right choice. It is, of course, not possible to analyse research as an abstract category. I had to research specific subjects in the performance practice while at the same time conducting a meta-reflection about this practice. As I see it, this double bind is the complicated task of artistic research: to navigate between being inside and outside the performance process and at the same time challenge this object/subject division in order to examine whether the performance process can be seen as a reflective space where objectivity and subjectivity can meet.

I see several further research perspectives in this project. In order

506 Here it is worth mentioning Bourriaud's concept of "postproduction", which designates a strategy that artists use to create works on the basis of pre-existing works. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Steinberg, 2002).

to develop my theoretical framework of research-based aesthetics I will have to expand and deepen my historical and theoretical mapping of research-based performance and consolidate my conceptualisation of performance research. I will follow different art practices through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and examine key moments in the development of research-based aesthetics. This trajectory includes an elaboration on the different artistic influences identified in this project: documentary art, conceptual art, learning interventions, epic theatre, and performance art. The mapping will provide an overview of politically engaged research-based performance and its forms of effective and affective thinking, including a critical reflection on the political potential and democratic role of research-based performance. Parallel to this itinerary, I find it important to develop an understanding of artistic research within a theatre and performance context. This task encompasses an identification of the methodology of performance research in order to designate how it differs from artistic research within other art forms.[507] I propose that a project of this historical, theoretical, and methodological width should be examined through a theoretical and artistic practice in order to deepen and qualify the relational exchange and interdependence between art and research.

In the epilogue I will address for the last time the three dimensions in the title of this project: thinking with performance, research-based aesthetics, and response to conflict and crisis.

507 A good example of performance research is to be found in the work of Coco Fusco, who in the previously mentioned *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* both writes about her performance research and critically reflects on the role of female interrogators. Her research exists both in the artwork and in the writing. It is worth mentioning that this is not a new practice for Fusco. In 1992–3 she performed the piece *The Couple in a Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West*, in which she and artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña dressed up as Amerindians and were caged for display in various places, such as plazas and museums. She brilliantly reflected on this performance piece in Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance", *TDR (1988–)* 38:1 (1994), 143–67.

Log: December 2018

Been thinking about Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*, in which she suggests that women writers should have a room of their own, understood as both a literal and a metaphorical room for artistic expression and thinking.[1] I consider performance research to be a room of my own where I can think and do research unbounded by academic and artistic limitations. A room of resistance where the resistance is directed not against male dominance, as in the case of Woolf, but against performing research that meets the demands of traditional academic knowledge. And then I think of the clerk Bartleby's irresistible refusal to perform simple office work in Melville's eponymous short story.[2] Bartleby begins working for a law firm, at first working efficiently, but one day he refuses to proofread a document with the words "I would prefer not to". He repeats these words, this answer, when confronted with other work tasks, until, at the end of the story, he dies of starvation because he has preferred not to eat. I do not propose that the artist should stop eating or stop working in an attempt to rebel against the demand for knowledge production. But I do propose that performance research carries a constant "I would prefer not to" gesture.

Please align, performance research!
I would prefer not to!

1 Virgina Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949).

2 Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014).

Epilogue

Thinking with Performance

In olden days, a glimpse of stocking
Was looked on as something shocking.
But now, God knows,
Anything goes.
Good authors too who once knew better words
Now only use four-letter words
Writing prose.
Anything goes.

Cole Porter, "Anything Goes", 1934

In this project I have used my own practice as a starting-point for thinking about research-based art in a broader perspective. In the performances I used research to create a performative space for reflection. In the description of my practice, I wrote about theory and my work process. Does this mean that anything goes in artistic research and research-based performance? Can one just jump between the reading of theory and artistic doing? My answer is yes and no: yes, anything goes in the artwork, and no, anything does not go in the documentation of the artistic process.

In a performance, the artist does not have to argue the truth or falsehood of a theoretical argument. It is possible to make ideas, postulates, and false documents in the artistic enunciation. That way, the spectator becomes a fellow researcher who has to navigate in the articulations on stage. The writing about the artistic process, on the other hand, has to document the artistic process and demonstrate how research is used in the artwork. However, it is important for me to highlight the fact that artistic research unfolds both in the performance process and in the writing process. The two processes represent a different way of doing research from traditional academic research. Thus, my approach to critical theory sometimes seems uncritical. My research process has been about accumulating material and statements, and not primarily about critically discussing the the-

ories in question. This is not to avoid the hard work and take a shortcut but simply because my artistic research follows a different trajectory where the focus is not on whether a theory is right or wrong but rather on how it accumulates material to the artistic process and produces connections and new lines of thought.

An example is my use of and representation of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (in Chapter 4). At a theoretical level I question her argument that torture is about depriving the victim of the voice. Her book is based on numerous sources, but the argument still stands out as a theoretical argument that does not take into account how much the victims of torture want to be heard once they are out of prison. I could have pursued this claim in a theoretically engaged discussion. However, that was not my intention. I found her argument extremely interesting in my artistic research process, where I used it to think about the invisibility of the victim and the making/unmaking dichotomy. I do not suggest that the artist should approach theory uncritically – or expose naivety – but I do suggest that the artistic process is, among other things, about accumulation and that theories do not have to be rejected if they help take the artistic process forward. Philosopher Marcus Steinweg proposes that art is not about proof or opinion ("Beweis oder Meinung") but rather about making statements, claims ("Behauptung").[508] I find this a very apt description to follow when talking about art and artistic research that accumulates statements – sometimes even contradictory ones – rather than drawing conclusions.

What do we (artists, educators, audiences) expect from artistic research? Do we expect a scientific approach, a way of describing the work process so that others can repeat it? Or do we expect a critically engaged discussion of the artistic practice?[509] My approach has been to look at artworks and read theory in order to: 1) make two performances; 2) develop the concept of research-based aesthetics; and 3) make a reflective documentation of my artistic research process. I constantly oscillated between thinking about artworks and thinking about theory both in my performances and in my writing. At the beginning I asked how to work in a research-based manner. I did

508 Marcus Steinweg, *Behauptungsphilosophie* (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2006), 7.

509 Most discussions about what artistic research should be or do take place within an educational context. See, for instance, Angela Vettese, "Foreword: How Do We Teach Art?" in Ambrožič and Vettese (eds.), *Art as a Thinking Process*, 8–16. For a critical perspective on artistic research, arts education, and the educational turn in art, see *Performance Research*'s special issue *On Radical Education* 21:6 (2016), with an insightful "Editorial" by Ric Allsopp and Michael Hiltbrunner, 1–4.

not want to formulate a method. I still do not want to formulate a method. I have performed one way of doing artistic research and research-based performance. My way of dealing with these formats has been *to think through and with performance and writing*: that is, I have performed artistic research both in the performance and in the dissertation. Thus, my writing in the dissertation follows my performance process and vice versa: I ask a question, read theory, ask a new question, see an artwork, ask a new question, work in the studio and so on. I describe what happened in the process, but at the same time I perform the process.

I distinguish between the performance and the written documentation. However, I want to stress that both the performance and the documentation unfold a productive interface between different fields of knowledge. The fields of artistic and theoretical thinking overlap, and it is in this overlapping that the remains of one field become something else in another one: the reading of theory in the artistic process creates another mode of thinking in the performance. Being inside the artistic process creates another mode of thinking in the writing. During the process, the balance between theoretical and artistic practice was about to collapse several times. It was tempting to transfer artistic findings to the theoretical reflection, and difficult to unfold the theory and research in the artistic enunciation. Instead of seeing this as an irresolvable conflict, I wanted to examine how artistic and analytical/theoretical practice might work together.

There is a constant exchange between research and practice both in the artistic practice and in the documentation of the research process. However, it seems to me that there is a spatial and temporal dimension that complicates the exchange. In this project the studio work and the written documentation unfolded in different workspaces. The documentation was enacted in the office with a temporal and spatial deferral, making it difficult to keep up the continuous exchange. The temporal and spatial deferral made it possible to think about what happened in the process, but it also added to the division between the two domains. In the artistic practice I worked with *creation* and *futurity*. I hesitate to use the word "creation", because it appears to romanticise the artistic process, connoting intuition rather than thinking. Nonetheless, my work process was about creating a performance for a future yet to come. In my documentation of the work I worked with *reflective description* and *the past*. Description is always linked to the near or remote past. It is about describing a process

that took place or is taking place. Importantly, this description is a document and a memory of the work. And even if it is occupied with the past, it takes place in a *now* – a moment of performative writing. Thus, there is not more "presence" in the performance process than in the writing process, but the performance process points to a future moment of engaging with an audience, whereas the writing process points to a past moment before producing a future moment of engaging with the reader.

Different production modes within the performance process and the after-reflection inevitably lead to different formats and thinking. We have to imagine other ways, spaces, and temporalities of interaction between research and practice in order to develop the two fields. I want to propose that the written reflective documentation of an artistic research project should include the insecurity, subjectivity, and fluidity that are often present in artistic practice. Or perhaps we should consider other formats than the written reflection for documenting an artistic research process. Examples could be: performance, performative exhibition, learning intervention, performance writing, social or political action, symposium, or networks between artists, thinkers, and experts. These are formats that already exist, but I think that by opening up the opportunity to reflect through artistic formats, new formats would appear and thereby enrich not only the field of artistic research but also the field of artistic practice.

In this process I think the most interesting interaction between research and art took place in the writing about, and working with, the themes of torture, terror, autoimmunity, and therapy. I felt that I inhabited the problem that I was researching. By contrast, I was struggling with the description of my artistic process. Here I was also placed at the centre of the problem, but I found it hard – and uninteresting – to write about my own work. I kept fighting the problem of my own intention, the fact that my consciousness was always directed towards a goal, making it difficult to see the process. Further, it was a challenge to develop a conceptual framework on the basis of my own practice, and I started looking at other research-based practices. In the making of a meta-reflection on research-based aesthetics, I experienced some of the creation and futurity of the artistic process. The making of concepts is a creative act pointing into the future.

My task has been to reflect on the artistic process rather than to perform self-criticism about the aesthetic output. However, if I were to be self-critical, I would say that *Precarious Life* worked as a lecture

performance but that *This is for her* never found its form.[510] The unresolved character of the performance is reflected in the dissertation, where I circle and circle around the same questions. The process of making *This is for her* is also a story of many ideas not realised. I am still questioning the poetic appropriations, the use of water as a metaphor, and the dramatic light design and sound score. What I intended to do is one thing; how the ideas worked in the performance is something different. This is an inherent problem of artistic research: the intention of the artist may cover up the simple question of whether the work did what the artist intended. Probably not, and this is why it is so difficult and problematic to write about one's own work. Perhaps it is not possible to perform interesting self-criticism. Rather, the writing on the process can be seen as a *self-dialogue* where the research artist or the artist researcher can discuss the representation of concepts and voices in the work, including the singular voice of the artist and the montage of researched voices. Stein captures this process when she describes the artistic process as one of talking and listening: "if you are to be really and truly alive it is necessary to be at once talking and listening, doing both things, not as if there were one thing, not as if they were two things, but doing them, well if you like, like the motor going inside and the car moving, they are part of the same thing."[511] The research-based artistic practice can be seen as a laboratory where the artist is talking and listening at the same time, using and transforming the research in the artwork and in the artistic research.

Research-Based Aesthetics

In the lecture "What is the Creative Act", from 1987, Deleuze says that, "information is the system of control".[512] Following this statement, I want to suggest that research-based performance should not reproduce authoritative knowledge or information uncontested. How does this correspond with my argument above, that art is about accumulation, that art makes statements, even false statements? To accumulate does not mean to be uncritical. The criticality

510 It was, of course, unpleasant to perform "an unresolved performance" in front of an audience. However, in the artistic research process it made sense to take the risk of making a performance where I was not sure where or how it would end. I have later had the opportunity to develop both performances after the first presentations discussed here.

511 Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", in Tania Ørum and Laura Luise Schultz (eds.), *Gertrude Stein: Stein taler*, (Copenhagen: Arena, 2006), 42.

512 Gilles Deleuze, "What is the Creative Act" (1987), 00:32:06, accessed 14 November 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKd71Uyf3Mo.

in the research-based performance exists within the artistic process of choosing and framing the researched material.[513] I do not use Derrida uncontested (Chapter 2, *Precarious Life*). I present his argument in a very framed context and in a way that I hope allows the audience's own interpretation.

The purpose of research-based performance is to create a space for alternative thinking where many voices can be heard. Reading theory as part of the artistic practice, doing art as part of the theoretical practice, is a condition for creating spaces for thinking. There is a feedback between artistic and theoretical thinking and doing. Moving between the two ways of working is not a way of performing a distance but rather a way of being inside both the artistic and the theoretical work process. What makes it interesting to work in this way is the preoccupation with matter both in the artistic and the theoretical practice. The artistic practice works with the materiality of performance, working with theory, thinking, and actions within the frames (light, sound, gesture, etc.) of performance. The theoretical practice works with the materiality of writing, installing performative spaces of thinking through performance writing. The aim is to cross the boundaries between artistic and theoretical practice by proposing how performance takes place both in writing and on stage, and how theory takes place both in writing and on stage. In my project I have pointed to the dynamics between art and research. Rather than understanding these levels as distinct categories, I want to see the potential in the messy overlapping of the fields. They could interact and a critical practice could unfold in the fields – not all the time, but some of the time. Different voices are speaking in research and art, but the point of research-based performance is that subjective and objective voices can interfere.

Research-based aesthetics is not a method but a field with coinciding characteristics. Some artists and artist groups work with a method, as is the case with Forensic Architecture, which appropriates legal tools in their artistic and academic investigation. And some artists and artist groups do not work with defined methods, as is the case with Mroué, who transforms the research in different ways in different media. My project consisted in making two performances and a reflection about my own practice and the field that my practice unfolds in. In the performances I tested different ways of working. The work has opened up different perspectives for where to take my ar-

513 See Rogoff, "What is a Theorist", discussed in Chapter 3.

tistic practice. I do not want to formulate a method. Performance has to be invented, re-invented, and developed in each artistic process. To make research-based performance is complex, challenging, and incurs a certain responsibility. It is about being inside the material. It is about not separating the artwork and the artistic research. It is about thinking with and through other artworks in order to develop one's own practice. It is about openness, responsiveness, and sensibility.

Response to Conflict and Crisis

It starts like this: a picture of a child being washed by his parents after one of the chemical weapon attacks.

How do we respond? How do we respond to an image of a Syrian child being treated after a chemical weapon attack? We either enter a relation with it or let it pass us by.[514] Most of the time we are caught in the role of passive bystanders. We are affected, knowing that sometimes the pictures provoke military action such as the US response to Assad's chemical weapon attacks. Pictures of chemical weapon attacks also appeared just before the Iraq War. Is this a coincidence? It is hard, if not impossible, to navigate between the media representation of contemporary conflicts. Which images are visible and which images are hidden? What are we to see and what are we not to see? What do we want to see?[515] And which frames of representation narrate the story of conflict?[516] As Hito Steyerl has pointed out, the idea of critical distance and objectivity is an illusion because we are all embedded in global capitalism.[517] In this urgent condition we need other modes of representation and spectatorship, which offer times and spaces for reflection. We may need a slower ontology, as proposed by Gaston Bachelard: another mode of listening and looking that is not passive but which in its very stillness produces a different and potentially critical response to the world.[518] I argue that research-based art responds to the gesture of conflict and crisis by creating alternative voices and

514 In this whole section I am influenced by Schneider's ethics of call and response. See Rebecca Schneider and Lucia Ruprecht, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability: Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht", *Performance Philosophy* 3:1 (2017), 108–25. Schneider, *Performing Remains*. Rebecca Schneider, "Besideness, Amongness, Wit(h)ness: Is Reperformance an Archive, a Round Dance, or Call and Response", unpublished paper at the symposium *To Be Archived*, Malmö Konstmuseum, 11 April 2018.

515 See Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, discussed in Chapter 5.

516 See Butler, *Frames of War*, discussed in Chapter 5.

517 Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty". See also Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image", in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 31–45.

518 Gaston Bachelard, "The Dialectics of Outside and Inside", in *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), 211–31.

spaces for thinking. It questions the necessity of factual accuracy and creates other representations of information and imagined realities. If not, we are left with the documentary uncertainty of CNN's burning pictures.

How do we respond? The research-based artworks described in this project develop tools to respond. They work with affect, as do the CNN images, but the affect is rooted in reflection. The political potential consists in giving other gazes on reality and not forcing the audience to action. I have a reservation though: I have a cruel suspicion that research-based artworks preserve our (the audience's and the artist's) passivity because we think that we have actually done something (and maybe we have) by *making* the artwork or *meeting* the artwork.[519] For a short moment we have reflected differently on reality and then we go home, turn CNN on, criticise it and then resign.

Fighting against this depressive thought, we may ask the old but always pressing question: what is it that art *can* do? Perhaps it is OK for art not to instigate revolution. Perhaps it is OK if art no longer presents a fully political programme.[520] Perhaps art performs politics instead of representing it. Perhaps art affects local politics. Perhaps a performance about Syria such as *The Pixelated Revolution* does not make us go to Syria, but perhaps it makes us react differently to the immigration politics of our country. Perhaps we cannot fight torture directly, but perhaps we can discuss Denmark's participation in the use of torture in war zones. Perhaps art makes us sensitive and calibrates a fluid sensibility that slowly spreads out and becomes a common sensibility. Perhaps we cannot fight terror, but perhaps we can discuss the consequences of the politics of fear performed in our country.[521] Perhaps we can question the representation of conflict and crisis in politics and media. Perhaps we will vote differently at the next election. And that is change.

How do we respond? Research-based art responds to a gesture and

519 My "cruel suspicion" is inspired by but not following Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism", which designates the discrepancy between what people desire and what they can actually achieve in the new precarious order of today. From the 1980s onwards a cruel optimism has represented promises of social mobility, security, and equality, which cannot be achieved today. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2011). The cruel suspicion is linked to the fear that we remain attached to an idea that art acts for us instead of on us, making us continue the cyclical web of actions acting.

520 Here I refer especially to Bertolt Brecht's dialectical theatre (epic theatre) or Augusto Boal's forum theatre. This does not mean that political art is absent. As I have argued in this study, the critical art of the 1990s was indeed political in its response to neo-liberal economics. Examples are the relational artworks described by Bourriaud that offer alternative modes of being. As I see it, research-based art also reaches out to the audience with a political gesture.

521 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

becomes itself a new gesture waiting for response. It calls for a response in the audience, not necessarily a visible or audible one, but a response that will inevitably make a new gesture and thereby continue the iterative process. Thinking is a trajectory. The two performances in this project responded to problems that affected me. Both projects were responses at a personal and political level. *Precarious Life* began as a personal response to my autoimmune disease and expanded to an examination of terror and autoimmunity. *This is for her* began as a political response to the Western world's participation in armed conflicts and use of torture and expanded into an examination of the durational consequences of torture as unfolded in therapy. In *This is for her* torture was exposed as a continuation of terror – an autoimmune defect of democracy – linking the two projects together.[522]

Derrida's paradoxical understanding of the potential and failure of democracy played a large role in this project.[523] On the one hand, he understands democracy as being governed by an internal autoimmune logic; on the other, he believes in the development of it. Democracy is always *to come*, as expressed in his concept "la démocratie à venir". There is no ending to democracy since it is based on openness and becoming. Thus, it is not possible to imagine a democracy fully achieved; it will always point forward to an otherness not yet known to us. The paradox of democratic autoimmunity is that it both kills democracy and keeps it alive. It illustrates the fact that democracy fails in protecting itself. But at the same time autoimmunity is necessary because democracy cannot become completely closed; it has to remain open in order to develop. On the one hand, I read Derrida's concept in a positive way: I use it to understand the necessity and possibility of research-based art, which has to make cracks in the current order and propose ways of seeing and being in the world. On the other hand, democracy has to be continuously questioned as a category: what constitutes democracy? How does it operate? Who is it for? And where does it take place? These are questions for an unending discussion about how democracy is to offer a framework for making art that creates spaces for different voices and oppositions.

How can we respond differently?[524] Schneider asks how a gesture can be understood as a call and response over time, how a reenactment of the past becomes a pre-enactment of the future, and how a gesture

522 The link between autoimmunity and torture is discussed in the Introduction.

523 Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*; *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*; and "Faith and Knowledge".

524 Schneider, "Besideness, Amongness, Wit(h)ness".

reaches out to us as a call for response. It is a call for relationality. Her complex elaboration on call and response across time applies both to the artwork, which remains an ongoing call for response, an ongoing performance, and the daily gesture of a hand greeting calling for response, becoming itself a response. This understanding of reenactment in and out of time was not only important for my thinking on reenactment (Chapter 5, *This is for her*) but has also become crucial for my understanding of how research-based aesthetics responds to conflict and crisis and why that response matters: how research-based artworks respond to a gesture of crisis and how they become themselves new gestures performing their call for response over time. If the media image can be seen as a gesture, then we can respond by calling out for a new response. But we can also respond by not calling, because the horror of the moment is short, and then it disappears (in our permanent state of emergency). Therefore we have to constantly renegotiate affect, emotions, moral, and ethics – we may respond differently, both individually and collectively.

I have complicated the concept of "research-based aesthetics" by looking at many different art practices. Here in the epilogue I have pointed to the potentialities of the concept promised in the title of the project: *Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis*. Research-based art makes thinking. It creates polyphonic spaces for political reflection and poetic appropriations of the world that we think we already know. Research-based art may not change or transform reality, but it can insist upon and make visible a critique of our response to conflict and crisis.

It starts like this: a picture of a child being washed by his parents after one of the chemical weapon attacks.

Appendix 1:
I Love You You Love Me
(Script for staged reading)

One coke can on the floor. One bucket of water on the floor. Signs projected on the back wall. Loud speakers in all corners. Pitch dark. Sing I love you, you love me while walking backwards in a circle. Lights slowly on. Stop in front of the audience, center, choreography.

You "I Love You" by Barney the Dinosaur is one of the most used songs for torture and interrogations at Guantánamo, the US military prison in Cuba. Sleep deprivation has the effect that your brain and body stop working normally. Your thoughts are slower, and your will breaks down. Tonight we are going to talk about torture and therapy. Why do we torture? And who is the perpetrator and who is the victim? To answer these questions we will follow a woman. This is for her.

I Before we start I would like to say something about beginnings. Beginnings are really hard because they are supposed to take place in the present. And of course this is the present. But some people say that the present doesn't exist because it is haunted by the future. This beginning doesn't exist because we know that it is going to end.
Some people say that *pain* so much exists in the present. But pain does not always take place in the present, but also in the future and the past. And in the imagination of the future and in the memory of the past. Sometimes the fear of pain is bigger than the pain itself. What is the beginning of pain?

You There is definitely something about time and torture, the durational aspect of torture, which is not only that pain makes time seem very long, but also that it stretches its effect into the future. Sometimes they place a Coca-Cola can in the room of torture and afterwards the victim will always be reminded of the torture when he sees a Coca-Cola can.

Other times they play a soundtrack with many voices as part of the torture. Afterwards the victim cannot be in public places with many people: demonstrations but also train stations or public pools.

I There are many beautiful beginnings. The beginning of a relationship, when you fall in love. The beginning of new cycles of your life like starting school, starting a new job, beginning to live in a new home, starting to occupy new territories. To begin to think new thoughts, feel new emotions, change your perception. And then there is the beginning of a performance...
In the beginning there is silence.

You In the future there will be pain.

I Let's begin.

Episode 1: This is her

You She is born.
She goes to kindergarten.
Water jets in the back yard in summer.
She goes to school.
She is afraid of going to the US because they have the death penalty.
She wants to be deaf so she can learn sign language.
In school she is compared to a boy. The boy is compared to her.
Shame is used to control people.
When she is 14 she has sex on a bathroom floor.
Road trips down the German autobahn.
Long winters. More winters and summers than autumns and springs.
She leaves the town she is born in.
She moves to a big city.
She wants to be a dancer.
She goes to the university.
She drops out and gets a job.
She lives with someone.
Picnic on Sundays.
She makes the sandwiches.
They split up.
She moves to another big city.
Sometimes she is in a relationship.
Most of the time she is alone.
She gets involved in an activist group.
One week after her 32nd birthday she dies.
Two weeks later she gets up and starts working again.
She changes sides.
She is happier where she is now.
She does not believe in regrets.
She is trying to do the right thing.
Sometimes she does something that she wouldn't have done before. Then she feels old.

I Is she a victim or a perpetrator?

You We don't know.

Episode 2: Therapy

Highlighted text to be said in unison.

I I don't think we can get rid of war. We have made some rules of war but in practice, we know that it is hard to live up to these conventions. When we began rehabilitation of torture victims we thought that the victim should tell and tell and tell. But sometimes it was too much. They came to relive the past. Now we know that we have to do something in between. We tell them that they don't have to tell everything. Many victims have one or more core experiences, which they experience again and again. Often it was when they were most defenceless in a torture session.

You In therapy she has to keep her role as a victim. She has been forced to torture others, but she can't tell this, because she can't get treatment if she has been a perpetrator. And this might have been the worst part of the torture... **She dreams about it at night and remembers it during the day.**

I Her nightmares are not incoherent as our nightmares. They are exact repetitions of the experience. Every time she thinks about it, her teeth and vagina hurt. The brain remembers with all senses. **She smells how it was, she sees it, she hears it, she feels it.**

You Our goal is to reduce her anxiety. She has to become anxious but not too much. 15–20% for 15–20 minutes a couple of times per week. Then the anxiety will slowly ebb away. Sometimes her anxiety reaches 90. That's too much.

I She's depressed and she's sad. She's afraid of walking in the street. She fears that she might be arrested, even though she knows that she's not going to be.

You She doesn't go out. She isolates herself from her family. She stays in a room and thinks about what she could have done differently, how she could have saved her brother. **She's tired and looses focus.**

I Our goal is to make her able to live her everyday life. Torture *is not a state of emergency*. It works by being linked to everyday life. It's about breaking trust. The first blow kills the trust in other people and that trust can never be restored.

You The normal treatment is 10–12 months. In reality the treatment is never finalized. She is vulnerable. Crisis will hit her harder than other people. There will be divorces and deaths and illness and suicide and cancer and … (*continues the list*).

I Nobody can resist torture. Eventually everybody is broken. They take her brother in and torture him to death in front of her. And they say it is her fault because she did this or didn't do that. **And she believes them.** She believes her perpetrators and she believes that nobody will ever believe her.

Episode 3: Confession

You

It is true that I am 37 years old.
It is true that I am standing.
It is true that I have a secret.
It is true that secrets define us as human beings.
It is true that I hit him.
It is true that his face was purple by the blood collecting behind the skin.
It is true that I left my family when I was 18.
It is true that I have a secret.
It is true that I saw it.
It is true that I only loved twice.
It is true that I am better than most.
It is true that I was born in a provincial town.
It is true that I often lie.
It is true that I am lying.

It is not true that I am guilty.
It is not true that I don't have secrets.
It is not true that I would like to have secrets.
It is not true that I heard it.
It is not true that you didn't do it.
It is not true that we will survive.
It is not true that I hit him.
It is not true that he had streams of blood falling down his back.

Episode 4: Do we desire to watch the pain?

I We want her to describe the pain.
We want to understand why.
We want to know.
We *want* to know.
In the beginning we want to see.
After a while we are not so interested.
It's the old discussion of looking or not looking.
Some say we should look.
Some say we should look away.
We need a clean victim.
We *need* a clean victim.
We want her to be more precise.
Please be more precise!

You The cell is very small. The walls are grey. They are made out of concrete. There is a window. But it is placed so high up that it is impossible to look out. Sometimes dust comes in the window. Outside the streets are leading to the city and the tourist attractions. Perhaps the pyramids, perhaps the Holiday Inn with its bullet holes and bomb craters, perhaps the Great Wall or the Wailing Wall. It's incredible far away.

I We are not saying anything about nationality. Or race. We are not saying anything about outsourced torture.

You We are just saying that it's far away from us.

I It is incredibly far away.

You We are just saying that the history is different there.

I The history is so different there.

You And the architecture is different.

I We are just saying that the architecture is very different there with features of French or British colonialism.

You But never Danish.

I No, never Danish.

Episode 5: Testimony

I I am 37 years old and I have been teaching in high school and also in university. At the time of war I was against war and because of this they arrested me. And they said to me: 'You have to support the war', and I said 'No, I am against war. This war is crazy war. Killing people on both sides. I hate that.' They said to me 'If you don't support it and tell your students, you will be punished and go to jail. ' They have been arresting me. They have been very serious. I have been in jail. After one year and a lot of torture they decided to kill me. There was no court. Just a small room. When they talk about a court, I'm laughing. The torturers were there and a priest – and then they ordered to kill me by hanging in public. Two hours before hanging, I escaped. That is one story I have to tell you later.

When I was arrested, I was together with my son. He was two years old. They have been torturing him. Because first, they didn't torture me. They said 'Do you want to support us?' I said 'No, no way' and they got so angry. They said 'We can show you' and they tortured my son. They beat him and – two years old – and then blood came out from his nose. I remember very well. That's the trouble for me.
I was in a single cell for one year. Sometimes we were two sometimes three. There was no toilet. When you wanted to go to the toilet that was terrible. I said 'I want to go to the toilet' they didn't answer, they didn't listen to me, they didn't open the door. After maybe three hours they came 'ok let's go'. That was very difficult. I didn't want to eat anything. I didn't want to drink anything. Many times I felt very cold. They gave no blanket to me, no way no way, just sleep. Torture and sleep.

In the beginning it was every day, every minute, every hour, interrogation and then torture. There were many different tortures. There was something we called football torture. It is like you are a ball. They torture you with their feet. One by one. And sometimes they are hanging you from the ceiling. Sometimes they give you electric shocks. They put

you in chains and then they put a hat on you and then they give you shock. We call that one opera torture. I don't know why. Another one was morphine torture. When I had a pain they were coming to give me morphine. I didn't want it. And after that my body was addicted to the morphine. I asked for another injection and they didn't give it to me. Then I had a lot of pain, a lot of pain.

Sometimes they were coming to take blood from me. Why? Because they want to send the blood to the war. They need blood for the war. You cannot say you want to give it. They tied you up and then they took the blood from you. That's it. And many psychology torture. I have seen some of my pupils be raped. Girls, 17-18 years old. They have been virgin. They have been raped. I have seen it with my eyes. They forced me to see. They said to me and to them: 'If you give information and support us, then ok. If not, we are going to torture, rape and execute.' I didn't want to support them and they said 'That's it then'. After one or two days they were executed.
Actually, if you like I can tell you how I escaped. If you don't, I don't.
The time of the escape I had been operated. It was a lot of pain, pain, pain, but of course I wanted them to operate me, because I liked to find out maybe some way to escape. I knew they were going to kill me. I knew that one hundred percent. 3 months after the operation they took me for interrogation. They tortured me a lot a lot a lot. And they said to me, 'We're going to kill you by hanging in the crane, the big crane.' They have been so tired of torturing me. And then one guard he was very tired and then he said, 'just wait here, we are going to kill you.' I said, 'ok.' And then he left me. I opened my eyes. I said to myself, I have to run. From here.

I was in a small yard with a very high wall and I jumped over the high wall and there was a small fence, military fence, and I went to the fence and jumped over and then a lot of blood was coming out of my body. Nobody had seen me. I was so lucky. I decided perhaps in 10 seconds and then

in 20 seconds I did it. I just ran away and then I came out. And I got to a place and I said to the people, 'I escape from jail'. They helped me, they said, 'We heard in the radio they were going to kill one person, a professor,' and then they went to a truck driver and asked him to take me out of the city. They gave him money. And then he did it. That was like that. After one year I came over the mountains. I came to the city. After that I wait wait wait wait.

Now I have ... when I am sleeping I cannot breath well, and my heart will stop and then I have to use a machine. 30 times every hour my breathing stops. Sometimes I have nightmares. I'm in the prison again. I try to escape. I cannot. I don't know what to do and then suddenly I wake up.

You Should we stop here?

I It is up to you.

(Sings: Down the Drain With Love.)

You She sings and then she remembers how her mother used to say that she couldn't sing and then she corrects herself because actually she only said it *one time* and she supposes many mothers have said something like that. But it stuck with her. And then she is thinking – this is so obvious – that humans are different and what sticks with one person – doesn't necessarily stick with another one. And that's the reason that the after-reaction of torture or war is very different from individual to individual.

Episode 6: She once read that Being in love is like being in Auschwitz

I That's it. A man and a woman.

You In a hotel room.

I They have met like this a thousand times before.

You They have made love 3000 times.

I Perhaps more.

You One should have made a document each time.

I An archive of lovemaking.

You She always thinks of the other times.

I He only thinks of the now.

You That's not true though.

I It's just something he says.

You Presence is memory of the past and projection of the future.

...

I She's suffering.

You It's emotional pain.

I Not physical.

You She can't let go of him.

I She's crying.

You It's a way to postpone life, the now, happiness.

I It's a way of neither being in the past or in the future or in the present.

You When you feel emotional pain you are not in time.

I When you feel physical pain you are completely in the here and now.

You Pain is a carpet. You lie under it.

I Or it's like a blanket. You take it and cover your body.

You Death is no pain. We fear death but really it's the end of pain.

I That's the attraction of suicide.

You Hate and love are very closely connected.

I Pain and pleasure are very closely connected.

You But she can just walk away. That's the big difference. She can just walk away.

~~That is an absurd and unreasonable comparison. You cannot compare physical and emotional pain. In torture there is a person intentionally causing another person pain. That might also be the case in love but the victim can just walk away. That's the big difference. She can just walk away.~~

Episode 7: Iraq

Highlighted text to be said in unison.

I She always aims to please.

You I don't want to talk about her.

I She did everything he wanted her to do. She didn't want to lose him.

You I'm not interested.

I At that moment she wasn't herself. At that moment she wasn't the person standing here right now. At that moment she was different.

You I don't want to understand.

I She still maintains that she does not regret what she did. She says: Yeah, I took the photos but I didn't make it world-wide.

You That's just too easy.

I She spends 2 years in prison. (She is convicted for torture and prisoner abuse during the occupation.)

You Well, that's fair. Or that's too little.

I She gives birth to a son.

You I don't even want to say what I'm thinking...

I She goes to war.

You Well, that's her decision.

I Before she *practices war* in a computer game. The senses are thought into the game structure. The sun is shining from

the same spot as in the real country. The same light. The same time. The same sunset. Sunrise. When she comes home from war she *practices coming home* in another game where she can reenact the traumatic events. She is a soldier.

You I don't want to understand her.

I She joins the army.

You Somebody should have stopped her.

I She divorces.

You Yes of course.

I She marries.

You Can't believe it.

I She works at a factory.

You She should have stayed there.

I She wants to be a storm chaser. She *wants* to be a storm chaser.

You And?

I She goes to school.

You That's just terrific.

I Most of the time she doesn't speak. (It's called selective mutism.)

You Should I pity her?

I She moves when she is two years old.

You Should we pity her?

I She is born. She is just born.

You We already know that.

I But we think we know more now.

You We can't believe that this is the girl who had water jets in the back yard. We can't believe that this is the girl who cannot let go of the man she loves. We can't believe that she is the one who cannot sing. We can't believe that she is the one who wanted to be a storm chaser. We are thinking about a picture of her in the landscape chasing a dark blue storm approaching from the background, firelight as a fallen stripe at the bottom of the horizon, tornadoes, thunder storms, lightning, cloud formations, and we are thinking about all the names she has given to them: **Kathrina, Amanda, Laura, Dolly, Sally Berta, Hanna, she is all of them, and we are thinking about a landscape beyond death.** (*Thunderstorm*).

Episode 8: Photos from Abu Ghraib

I They are asked to come out of the rooms into the corridor. They are asked to undress and lay on top of each other in a pyramid.

Reenactment with chairs.

They are asked to remain still. The man and the woman think it is practical: There's seven of them and it's such an enclosed area and it'll keep them together and contained because they have to concentrate on staying up on the pyramid instead of doing something to the man and the woman. (Later the woman says: "If the media hadn't exposed the pictures to that extent, then thousands of lives would have been saved.")

You I don't know if we should even look at these pictures ever again.

I But *she* is looking at them. She is looking at the pictures. Scandalous pictures.

~~Fiction and fact both appear real in consciousness. Emotions and fantasies are as important for what people remember as what really happened. What really happened is only important in court. And this is not a court.~~

I ~~Did I tell you that the material has started to have its effect on me? I dream long night dreams. This night I had been appointed by the regime to stand in the first line when we were all going to die. It gave me an enormous freedom or lightness.~~

You ~~I don't sleep anymore. The nights have become a rush towards the border of sanity. In the dark, the fear of an unexpected touch can mount to panic. Fear feels like pain.~~

Episode 9: Question Time

You Is the space dark or light?
What events have left traces in your body?
Are you a racist?
Are you honest?
Have you ever killed someone?
Have you ever killed something?
How did you do it?
If you were to murder us what would you do?
If you were to murder a group of persons what would you do?
Do you believe in Western society?
Do you believe in democracy?
What is pain?
What happened to the lost moments of the past?
What happens to your lost memories?
Are you funny?
Are you clever?
Are you pretty?
Are you ready to die?
How would you like to die?
How does electricity work?
Would you like me to touch you?
Are you a violent person?
Am I likeable?
What do you want?
Are you in love?
How long do you think that will last?
Have you ever had your heart broken?
How many times can a person have their heart broken?
What is a good person?
Are you a good person?
Is life better for good persons?
If I cried now what would I cry for?
Name seven kinds of joy.
Name seven kinds of torture.
Is there something after death?

Episode 10: Show Time

You This is it. We are in it. She has researched psychiatric diagnoses or madness among torture victims. The truth is that the victims want to talk to her about their pain. They talk all the time. They talk and talk and talk. If only she can listen. If only she can bear to listen. It's about those who come out of prison and their families. What happens when the prisoner comes home and has to be a mother or wife? It's not so heroic. Perhaps she has to do some shopping, but maybe she has got claustrophobia and cannot be in a marketplace or in a supermarket. What happens when the prisoner comes out of jail and locks herself in a room, because it's the only thing she can deal with?

I She knows that something has happened to the moral staging of us as a good nation. We are the bogeyman. From being good guys, we are in all ways with the bad guys. It is *us* who do these things. Earlier, torture was something that happened to those poor victims who came to us and were treated, done deal. Now *we do it*, we don't only treat it.

You *Perhaps* we do not do the act, but *perhaps* our soldiers have run the car with the soldiers who did it. *Perhaps* we collaborate with the intelligence services, which we know do it. *Perhaps* we do it just once in a while.

I She knows that there is something eroticized in torture. But we don't talk about it because we need a clean victim who is not complicit. There is no way to stay completely clean. Victims and perpetrators are together all the time in a very intense way. That does something to people's brains, bodies and psyches.

You She knows that there are many relationships between victim and perpetrator. It is certainly not pure hatred. It is also disappointment and loyalty. It is also water and a chance to go to the bathroom.

I She knows about the bottle. She knows that the bottle is

just penetration with a bottle that might break. She knows that it's not so important whether it's her or me. The expectation is bad. Is it tomorrow or after tomorrow and what is it going to be, the bottle or falanga?

You She knows that falanga with every blow to the feet destroys the nerves in the feet forever. Every time you take a step there is pain. You have to learn to *function with pain*. To live with it.

I She knows that torture makes people scared shitless. For it to happen again, or happen to someone they know. She knows that torture is not about information. It never has been.

You But the "ticking bomb" is: *If* the man with the information about the bomb sat in this room, should we not torture him?

I Before we end I would like to say something about endings. Endings are very often melancholic. They leave the definite conclusion that everything is ending, life, relationships, being in love, love. I think that most people wish that love were not ending, that love would be the one thing that exceeds time. I always have a desire for a performance to end. This is not necessarily the same as the desire for death. Some try to make the comparison and of course it is a little bit like that. Even when you are reading a novel, you don't want to end, you are always quite aware of when the last page is arriving and also very aware of it going to end and sometimes your reading pace accelerates in the ending even though you don't want it to end. It is a complete paradox. And it is like that. Or at least it is for me. So what about the time-space in the middle, between the beginning and ending? I suppose pain is exactly in the middle. Pointing to the beginning and to the end.

Episode 11: International Torture Victim

You She's invisible.

I Perhaps there is never anyone who's seen her.

You She walks down the street without anyone noticing it.

I She lies down next to her lover without him noticing.

You Her family doesn't see her.

I Her friends don't see her.

You She can't even see herself.

I She looks in the mirror and sees nothing. No sense. No goal. She's worthless, powerless ... She can't do anything.

You Can you see her? Can you see her?

I Sometimes she dreams that she flies over it all and sees herself standing in a room full of people.

You The others can't see her. She's a slender contour without content. She knows she is there, but she can only see the shape.

I Hold that image. Fill out the shape. Say it.

You It's too difficult.

I Say it.

You I'd like to be seen. Love me. Touch me.

I It's too difficult. She can't say it. She can't believe it. It's all about belief.

You Wake up at night, fighting sleep, can't be with someone, can't be with herself, can't say anything, can't do anything, can't make up her mind, can't make up her fucking mind, nothing matters, can't cry, can't see anything, standing still and sinking, sinking further into the mud, sits in the hole, it's fucking dark, only a simple chink of light, and then she sinks down through the floor, can't hear anything, she doesn't want to be here, she'll just stand here, let her just stand here, she feels so old, so unbearably old, everything is hopeless, she is 500 years old and still alive, she's so tired, she just wants to sleep, no she cannot sleep, if she falls asleep, she'll disappear.

Appendix 2: *Invisible Visible*

(Script for PowerPoint performance)

For the body, life is simple.
It is born to a life in visibility.
It might be more or less strong, the features might be more or less beautiful, the visual similarity to other bodies might be more or less clear.
The body is always present in the here and now.
The life of the body is constantly visible, exposed to the surroundings.
That is: the life of the body is constantly visible while it is alive.
When it dies we make it invisible.
We burn it or bury it.
We make it disappear.
We say that it is the inner life that counts, but since the inner life is not visible, we still make judgments from a person's visual appearance.
We have to be visible to be acknowledged.
Perhaps even to be happy.
No wonder why we sometimes want to disappear from this visible setting.
Reappear in invisible clothing, so that we can do, act, and be, what we want.
You can call me Sofie.
Last year I was going to work on a new performance.
I decided to work on terror.
I thought terror would be a relevant and politically engaging theme.
I decided on the working title: *Piece on Terror*.
I only had one problem: I didn't want to be seen on stage.
At that time I couldn't sleep at night.
I had done something very stupid and the stupidity had spread out and filled my whole life.
I just wanted to disappear.
Well, I didn't want to disappear completely.
I just wanted to be invisible for a short period of time.

I met with the curator.
I told him I had started to work on: HOW TO BE INVISIBLE.
I asked myself: How can I become invisible? Do I disappear if I become invisible? Can I shift between visibility and invisibility? If I could be invisible, what would I do?
Invisibility is not the same as disappearance.
Disappearance is the solution for cowards.
You can run away from your life or you can seek the great disappearance: death.
Invisibility makes it possible to stay in your reality and even change this reality.
Obtain a certain freedom. Ignore the borders of others. Make room for the hopes, dreams and thoughts of one's inside.
In the beginning I try to become invisible in my home by hiding or becoming something else.
I remember the first time I ever felt invisible:
It's winter. The light is grey and the house is cold.
I'm leaving. I don't tell. I want to disappear.
I walk down the empty streets of the neighbourhood. Past the forest, out into the fields.
There's still snow in the grass. My winter jacket is grey. I have long, blonde hair.
I feel cold. I keep walking. Passing a ditch, I fall over and my clothes soak up the wet snow.
Keep walking. I am too cold. I am too angry. I turn around and walk home.
Nobody noticed my disappearance.
I begin to ask people close to me: when have you felt invisible?
My mother tells me:
I am ten years old. The lake is frozen. I grab my skates.
My mother says that I shouldn't go to the end of the lake where the ice is thin.
I skate out to the end of the lake. I fall through a hole in the ice.
The water is cold. I'm dying. Someone crawls out and offers me her hand.
Last year my grandmother died in a hospital.
She was brought to a chapel within an hour.
She only stayed in the chapel for another hour to be seen by the family.
After that she became invisible and never seen again.

In summer I go to Cairo to work on a project.
I am very fascinated with the visible invisibility of Muslim women.

How their dresses hide most of their bodies while making their presence very clear.
At a wedding I notice the galabiyas the men are wearing.
I think that if I can become a Muslim man
I will be truly invisible.
That day my boyfriend asks me to marry him.
I say no.
Perhaps a little too fast.
I buy a galabiya and begin practicing how to become a Muslim man.
I take a course in male belly dancing.
Back in Copenhagen. It's autumn.
I'm working as a performer in a theatre piece.
I have always been a bit suspicious towards the absolute presence of theatre.
There is no place as visible as a stage and no person as visible as a performer.
But when you perform a role, your own self becomes invisible.
My character is particularly emotional and when I'm crying or laughing hysterically on stage, throwing my arms around in space, I feel completely invisible in a very visible manner.
At the end of the play I shoot myself.
Suicide is an effective way of becoming invisible.
But it's such a cliché.
Especially for women.
It's mostly men who have tried to become invisible.
Women are better at transformation – becoming something else, like harpies:
half woman, half bird. At the studio I practice becoming a bird.
I meet with the curator.
How is it going with your performance? he asks.
I've realized that the steps towards autonomy look exactly like the steps towards presence, I say.
Yes, of course, he says, autonomy means presence, even more: power, focus, here look at me...
...but I don't want to be seen...
...but what we are aiming for are the layers of several autonomous elements, so that the spectators can choose.
I ask him when he has felt invisible.
He says:
I'm 17 years old. I ride on my bike in the snowstorm. Too fast. Bang! I hit a car. I

wake up in the hospital. I have no face left. No teeth left. Nobody recognizes me.
It's winter. I'm making a video about revolution. I buy a mask.
In a book about nudity I read that *person originally means mask.*
It is only through recognition by others that man can constitute himself as a person.
So why should a person desire to be invisible?
Is it to be a voyeur?
Is it to gain access to all the secrets in the world?
Is it to get rich or gain power?
Is it to kill?
Is it to become a cosmic dancer who can jump from one foot to the other and have the insights of a thousand different positions?
Is it because there is truth to be found in the invisible?
Somebody has discovered the stupid thing I did in spring.
Not so good.
Gossip.
I realize that people in war and terror use invisibility as a strategy.
I watch a documentary about General Butt Naked, a leader in the Liberian civil war.
He got his name because he used to lead his troops naked, except for shoes and a gun.
He says:
My nakedness was a source of protection from bullets.
I would sacrifice a victim before battle. Usually it was a small child.
We would pluck out the heart, and divide it into pieces for the boys to eat before a battle.
We'd slaughter anyone we saw, chop their heads off and use them as soccer balls.
We were nude, fearless, drunk yet strategic.
During that period I had magical powers that made me invisible.
Have you noticed the sound?
It's the sound of silence.
Silence is the invisibility of sound.
In the new year I walk to the studio every day.
There is something with the snow covering the city.
I practise invisibility.
It's all about belief, they say.
I become very good at hiding under a white bed cover.
I think about the aesthetics of hiding.
I walk around the building carrying a spotlight, blinding the people I meet.

You can make something invisible by making something else visible.
In the supermarket I buy a deodorant called ‘invisible’.
I get naked and roll on the deodorant all over my body.
Now I smell very bad.
I sit in the darkness and imitate Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now*.
I try to document my experiments.
I realize that it is impossible to document invisibility.
I’m bored.
Do I *really* want to be invisible?
I can just stay away from the stage
the light
the focus.
So if the question is not about how to be invisible, what is it then?
Would you rather be invisible or able to fly?
Would your rather be deaf or blind?
I begin collecting my notes from the work process in a PowerPoint presentation.
I leave out most.
I regain my belief in invisibility.
Invisibility can be used as a resistance to power.
Power cannot control a nothing; it cannot fight an invisible body.
Nearly a year of invisibility.

It’s time to be visible:

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Performance Credits and Links

Precarious Life

Concept, text, and performance: Sofie Volquartz Lebech
Sound design and live sound: Pelle Skovmand
Set design consultant: Sille Dons Heltoft
Choreography consultant: Kasper Daugaard Poulsen
Costumes: Anna Rosa Hiort Lorenzen
Graphic design: Søren Meisner
Script translated from Danish: René Kruse and Sofie Volquartz Lebech

Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNQxxygnwW8
Or: https://vimeo.com/113894296 Password: dokumentation.

I Love You You Love Me

Performers: Katrina Bugaj and Sofie Volquartz Lebech
Concept and text: Sofie Volquartz Lebech
Sound design: Pelle Skovmand

Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2x9toe4QKXg&feature=youtu.be

This is for her

Performers: Katrina Bugaj and Sofie Volquartz Lebech
Concept and text: Sofie Volquartz Lebech
Choreography: Kasper Daugaard Poulsen
Sound design: Pelle Skovmand
Light design: David Nicolas Abad
Set design: Sille Dons Heltoft
Performance assistant: Nannan Chen
Dramaturge: Tanja Diers
Video and graphic design: Søren Meisner
Costumes: Amalie Aunsbjerg Jørgensen
Script translated from Danish: Nina Larissa Bassett and Sofie Volquartz Lebech

Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C840u1bNLOM
Note: This documentation is from the first version of the performance in the original space. The script included in this dissertation is from the later altered English version.

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Summary

Through the 2000s, I watched many research-based performances and I saw how they responded to conflict and crisis on both a political and a personal level. I recognised the urge to use research within an artistic practice in order to examine complex problems. I began questioning what a research-based aesthetics may be.

Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis is an artistic research project, which examines how to critically think with performance. The main thesis is that research-based performance uses research to respond to conflict and crisis and to create spaces for thinking where artist and audience can reflect on the represented material. As such the research-based performance responds to a gesture of conflict or crisis and becomes itself a new gesture performing a call for response over time. The project has two dimensions: on the one hand, I develop two performances using different research strategies; on the other, I identify a research-based working mode visible in a number of artistic practices that use, create, and perform research in order to imagine and represent other realities. The project is based on this duality, where I work artistically with research, while at the same time I develop a conceptual framework of research-based aesthetics.

Thinking with Performance brings together different sorts of research material, including reflections on my artistic work process, the production of two performances, analyses of artworks, and readings of theory. It thus points to how the different acts of thinking affect each other in artistic and theoretical practice. My two performances are both formal and thematic reactions to problems that have disturbed me at a personal and political level. The first performance, *Precarious Life*, is a performance lecture about terror and autoimmune diseases. The second performance, *This is for her*, is about torture and therapy. Both performances focus on conflicts in the body of society and in the individual body.

In Chapter 1, "Research-Based Performance", I carry out a mapping of research-based performance, including the emergence of genres such as performance lecture, knowledge exchange performance, performance as exhibition, and documentary performance.

The subsequent script "Precarious Life" documents the performance lecture, which I performed in the operating theatre of Medical Museion in 2014. Here I think through Jacques Derrida's conception of "democratic autoimmunity" to examine how terror functions as an autoim-

mune disease, and how an autoimmune disease functions as terror in the body.

Chapter 2, "*Precarious Life* as a Research-Based Performance", is a reflection on the theoretical, poetic, and autobiographical research dimensions of the performance. It is a dissection of the levels of knowledge as well as a study of autoimmunity and terror.

In Chapter 3, "Research-Based Aesthetics", I think through theoretical approaches to relationality (Nicolas Bourriaud), interdisciplinary knowledge flow (Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Mieke Bal), criticality (Irit Rogoff), and queering of knowledge (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) to construct a conception of research-based aesthetics as a way of thinking artistically through and with performance.

The subsequent script "This is for her" documents the second performance, which I performed in the theatre Får302 in 2017. It uses different forms of documentary storytelling: retelling of interviews with victims of torture, reenactment of scenes of violence, and dissemination of archival material about torture.

In the next two chapters I examine how to represent torture and therapy on stage. In Chapter 4 "Torture, Therapy, and Testimony in *This is for her*" I discuss whether we can see torture as an isolated event and therapy as a scripted retelling of that event. Theoretically informed by theories of torture as the unmaking of the victim's world (Elaine Scarry) and testimony as way of bearing witness (Shoshana Felman), I explore how narratives and testimonies work as *reality makers* in torture, therapy, and art. In Chapter 5, "Return and Repetition: Reenacting Scenes of Violence", I examine how to reenact the photos from Abu Ghraib. Combining reflection on my own work, a close reading of Candice Breitz's video installation *Love Story* (2016), and critical theories of representation (Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, and Rebecca Schneider), I ask if we can understand moments of conflict and crisis through staged reenactments.

A concluding chapter, "Representing Research: Fact, Affect, Document", proposes that research-based artworks apply facts, affect, and documentary strategies in order to represent the researched and reflected material. I conclude by reflecting on the use of artistic research as a means of examining research-based performance.

In the "Epilogue" the different levels of this project come together: artistic research, research-based aesthetics, and research-based performance. The aim is to extend the discussion about performance as research and in so doing contribute not only to the field of artistic research but also to that of artistic practice.

Resumé

Op gennem nullerne så jeg en række researchbaserede performances, og jeg bemærkede, hvordan de reagerede på konflikter og kriser på både et personligt og politisk plan. Jeg genkendte trangen til at bruge research i en kunstnerisk praksis for at undersøge komplekse problemstillinger. Jeg begyndte at tænke over, hvad en researchbaseret æstetik kan være.

At tænke med performance: Researchbaseret æstetik som reaktion på konflikter og kriser undersøger, hvordan man tænker kritisk med performance. Hovedtesen er, at man i researchbaseret performance bruger research til at reagere på konflikter og kriser og til at skabe rum for tænkning, hvor kunstner og tilskuer kan reflektere over det repræsenterede materiale. Den researchbaserede performance kan ses som en reaktion på en krise og bliver på den måde selv en ny gestus, der rækker ud efter en reaktion. Projektet har to dimensioner: på den ene side udvikler jeg to performances med forskellige researchstrategier, på den anden side udpeger jeg en arbejdsmåde, der udfolder sig i en række kunstneriske praksisser, der bruger, skaber og performer research til at forestille og fremstille andre måder at være i verden på. Projektet er baseret på denne dobbelthed, hvor jeg arbejder kunstnerisk med research, mens jeg udvikler en konceptuel ramme for researchbaseret æstetik.

At tænke med performance består af forskelligt researchmateriale: refleksioner over min kunstneriske arbejdsproces, to performances, analyser af kunstværker og læsning af teori. På den måde viser projektet, hvordan forskellige tankeformer påvirker hinanden i kunstnerisk og teoretisk praksis. Mine to performances er både tematiske og formmæssige reaktioner på problemer, der har anfægtet mig på et personligt og politisk niveau. *Skrøbelige liv* er en performance lecture om terror og autoimmune sygdomme. *This is for her* er en performance om tortur og terapi. Begge performances fokuserer på konflikter i samfundskroppen og i den individuelle krop.

I kapitel 1, "Researchbaseret performance", laver jeg en kortlægning af researchbaseret performance, der inkluderer fremkomsten af genrer som performance lecture, vidensudvekslende performance, performance som udstilling og dokumentarperformance.
Herefter følger manuskriptet til performance lecturen *Skrøbelige liv*, som jeg spillede i operationsteatret på Medicinsk Museion i 2014. Jeg bruger Jacques Derridas begreb om "demokratisk autoimmunitet" til at undersøge, hvordan terror fungerer som en autoimmun sygdom, og hvordan

en autoimmun sygdom fungerer som terror i kroppen.

I kapitel 2, "Skrøbelige liv som en researchbaseret performance", reflekterer jeg over de teoretiske, poetiske og selvbiografiske researchdimensioner i performancen. Jeg dissekerer vidensniveauer samtidig med, at jeg undersøger autoimmunitet og terror.

I kapitel 3, "Researchbaseret æstetisk", bruger jeg teorier om relationalitet (Nicolas Bourriaud), interdisciplinær vidensudveksling (Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari og Mieke Bal), *criticality* (Irit Rogoff) og *queering* af viden (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) til at konceptualisere en researchbaseret æstetik, der indfanger en måde at tænke med og igennem performance.

Herefter følger manuskriptet til *This is for her*, som jeg spillede på teatret Får302 i 2017. Det indeholder forskellige dokumentariske fortællestrategier: genfortælling af interviews med torturofre, reenactment af voldelige scener og arkivmateriale om tortur.

I de følgende to kapitler undersøger jeg, hvordan man kan repræsentere tortur og terapi på en scene. I kapitel 4, "Tortur, terapi of vidnesbyrd i *This is for her*", diskuterer jeg, om vi kan se tortur som en enkeltstående begivenhed og terapi som en *scripted* genfortælling af den begivenhed. Jeg bruger teori om tortur som en "ødelæggelse" (*unmaking*) af vidnets verden (Elaine Scarry) og vidnesbyrd som en måde at genskabe traumet (Shoshana Felman) til at undersøge, hvordan narrativer og vidnesbyrd *skaber virkelighed* inden for tortur, terapi og kunst. I kapitel 5, "Gentagelse og tilbagekomst: Reenacment af voldelige scener", diskuterer jeg, hvordan man kan reenacte fotografierne fra Abu Ghraib. Jeg kombinerer refleksioner over mit eget arbejde med en analyse af Candice Breitzs video installation *Love Story* (2016) og kritiske teorier om repræsentation (Susan Sontag, Judith Butler og Rebecca Schneider) for at spørge, om vi kan forstå konflikter og kriser gennem reenactments.

I et konkluderende kapitel, "At repræsentere research: faktum, affekt, dokument" argumenterer jeg for, at research-baserede kunstværker bruger facts, affekt og dokumentariske strategier til at repræsentere det reflekterede researchmateriale. Jeg konkluderer ved at diskutere potentialet i at bruge kunstnerisk forskning til at undersøge researchbaseret performance.

I Epilogen mødes de forskellige niveauer af projektet: kunstnerisk forskning, researchbaseret æstetik og researchbaseret performance. Målet er at udvide diskussionen om performance som research og dermed bidrage både til kunstnerisk forskning og kunstnerisk praksis.